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THE WILL

A NOVEL

BY

ERNST ECKSTEIN

Author of "Quintus Claudius," etc.

FROM THE GERMAN

BY

CLARA BELL

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THE WILL.

CHAPTER I.

On the third day after the duel an unexpected visitor came to Emma Lersner's assistance in nursing the patient; this was Karl Theodor Heinzius who, without giving Otto any kind of notice, arrived with all his little possessions to take up his abode under the same roof. Then it was actually true—though Otto had hardly been able to believe it—true that this benevolent, simple man, who interfered with no one, who disputed nobody's convictions, and never asserted his own—Karl Theodor Heinzius had been dismissed from his post on some pretext of neglected duty, and without further ado turned into the streets! It was a bitter wind that blew in some places! Even the pastor of Halldorf had not escaped spiteful comment for having been on intimate terms, all these years, with such a man as Heinzius. The good, hapless schoolmaster had

never dreamed of such disastrous results when he had uttered the heretical theory that many things in the History of Creation, as recorded by Moses, were probably to be taken symbolically rather than literally. In support of this opinion he had, most unluckily, quoted a passage from an essay by a distinguished prelate; this passage, however, had been intended by the author to prove precisely the reverse, so that the committee of management who ruled Karl Theodor's destinies regarded this as an additional and wilful insult. They signified to Herr Heinzius that henceforth he was to abstain from all comment on matters Biblical, which indeed formed no portion of his restricted teaching, and he was also required to explain to the children, in the presence of the school director and the pastor of the parish, that he was grieved to find that he had erred in his exposition of the first chapters of Genesis.

Heinzius, who was the humblest of mortals and who would have accepted even such a mortification as this if he could have accused himself of a misconception or a fault, rebelled against the arbitrary verdict; the worm had turned—the lamb became a lion. He petitioned, in the humblest terms, to be graciously spared this unpleasant scene; and when his "humble request" was

rejected, he distinctly and positively refused to obey. This piece of audacity sealed his fate.

Finding himself suddenly and actually destitute he came to a prompt determination. He knew that Wellner would receive him with open arms; his few wants would weigh but lightly on the young man. What did he need? A bed on a sofa, or at the worst on the floor; a corner where he might sit and study, and a frugal meal which his last quarter's salary would provide for the present. And he was perfectly convinced that, in the capital, some new path would open immediately at his feet.

So here he was, in high spirits after his journey on foot, full of roseate hopes; and on his arrival found himself called upon to fulfil the duties of a sick-nurse.

Emma, who had heard of him from Wellner, welcomed him all the more heartily because Roderich, with the best intentions in the world, was incurably clumsy, and Adele just now, in the height of the season, had no time to spare. The type-founder too was of no use but to send on errands; in the sick-room he was less help than hindrance.

Heinzius was quite different. This frail little man—the ideal type of a schoolmaster—who

looked so utterly and impractically learned, revealed a perfect genius for the duties of a Samaritan; he was a born nurse, with the steady hand of a professional and the tenderness of a mother.

Thus, by the end of a week, Emma Lersner's eyes again looked brightly on the world. Her mother had recovered more rapidly than had been thought possible, and now only needed rest. Otto Wellner had got on so well under the care of his old teacher that Emma had only to superintend matters, and was at leisure to resume her usual business.

Otto was, in fact, fast recovering. The violent fever which had at first supervened soon yielded to treatment, and he looked up with the eagerness of restored life into the girl's gentle face—no longer a dim shade in a delirious dream, but bright and clear and real, the embodiment of a spring day.

Heinzius never left his side. Professor Salomon, who had looked in now and again, had told him every detail of the duel, and Heinzius, who, at first, had been inclined to censure such a breach of the peace on moral grounds, began to feel a sort of fatherly pride when he learnt how bravely Otto had gone on with the affair.

Roderich Lund too was a frequent visitor; he

loaded the wounded hero with professions of imperishable friendship, and swore that on the first opportunity he would challenge half Europe. He had, of course, withdrawn his application for admission to the Authors' club; but he promised himself the satisfaction of calling Kurt Ewald to account as soon as Otto should be convalescent. Then he would go off into ecstatic dissertations, which he always ended by declaring that he, like the outside public, regarded Otto's share in the duel as a stroke of championship in behalf of radicalism against a political adversary.

Otto was still too weak to formulate any logical argument on the question which Lund dwelt on with such vehemence. Even when Heinzius asked him in great astonishment: "What on earth made you stand up for this crazy revolutionary? When and where did you pick up these opinions?" and so forth, Otto could only reply: "By-and-bye."

In the middle of the second week Doctor Lehrbach came to see him; he had sent every day to enquire for him but, by the doctor's advice, had kept away from his bed-side.

"This is a pretty business!" he exclaimed holding out his hand to his protégé. Then, turning to the schoolmaster, he added: "You I believe are Herr Heinzius? Professor Salomon told me

how faithfully you had been nursing this young scapegrace."

Heinzius bowed till his coat flapped like wings.

"A very pretty piece of business!" repeated the lawyer. "I tell you what, my dear Herr Wellner, if Herr von Düren had not given me his word of honor, you would have begun next month with the pleasant surprise of finding yourself dismissed—instead of being appointed editor-in-chief."

"What?" cried Otto in amazement. "Editor—impossible!"

"But a fact, my good friend, a fact. Doctor Wolf retires on the first of January. I knew he would; he is very well off and has just come into some money; but you knew that already. — The immediate reason of his secession is perhaps that all sorts of unpleasantness has beset him lately; *exempli gratia* some difficulty with the Baroness Eleonora von Sunthelm with reference to a dreary article on her Asylum for young children, or whatever it is. The lady did not think that her merits were duly recognized and appealed to Von Düren; — and other things of the same kind. Doctor Wolf is too pliant, too conciliating. Now you — you have shown. . . ."

Otto sighed.

"Well, there is still one question to be settled," Lehrbach went on. "I have made all straight so far, and on my honor, I can assure you it was a hard matter. The whole town is talking of your duel; you are regarded as a determined champion of socialism. Now just imagine! — Von Düren, who is almost a conservative — and an editor who is ready to shoot a man in the interests of the revolutionary party.—Well, after much persuasion I drove him into a corner. The "Glocke," as I explained to him, is a purely literary magazine; then he, as the publisher, retains the right of *Veto* as he is held responsible for what he prints. Then again, the affair with Ewald, though it is an open secret, is not an official scandal; it originated in a mere personal dispute which by degrees — and perhaps only after the fact, in the telling of the story — took the aspect of a quarrel over principles. 'I undertake' — so I told him — 'to bring the young fellow to reason. He has sense enough to listen to arguments.' So the matter is settled.— One thing only you must let me tell you plainly: Herr von Düren expressly declares that in the event of any repetition of these revolutionary demonstrations he will certainly resign the honor of all business connection with you."

Otto was speechless. A sense of overwhelm-

ing shame choked him; he tried to murmur his thanks, but Doctor Lehrbach stopped him.

"No excitement," he said kindly. "We will take a future opportunity of discussing the theoretical and logical objections to your opinions — I understand too, from Doctor Salomon, that he has given you his capital essay. As soon as you are allowed to read, put your nose into that. Practically, what I would say is this: Do you know that the police are on the tracks of a revolutionary conspiracy? A conspiracy in due form too, as I hear. Till now nothing definite has been discovered; the fact is certain, the persons concerned are still a mystery. There is a regular plot for an organized outbreak. Large quantities of inflammatory placards have been found, with weapons and all the paraphernalia of rebellion, including a few hundred-weight of dynamite, in a cellar in the Kapuzinergasse — enough to send half the city sky-high. The owner of the house professes ignorance, and as he is a very respectable old fellow his declaration may perhaps be true. All this is talked of to-day *sub-rosa*, but it will be in all the papers by to-morrow, and as the public excitement increases, so will the fevered activity of the police. Of course, every notorious social democrat will be an object of suspicion, and so. . . ."

"Herr Doctor," interrupted Otto boldly, "I am not a social democrat — neither a notorious one, nor a covert one. As fully as yourself. . . ."

"So much the better," said the lawyer. "But at that rate I fail to understand what you meant by your speeches at the Authors' club, and by other things too. However, we will speak of that another time — no discussions for the present; they will send the blood to your head and delay your recovery. Is it not so, Herr Heinzius? — Quiet is the first and last thing! I trust to that entirely."

He shook hands with the patient, gave the schoolmaster a friendly nod and withdrew.

"A heart of gold," Otto murmured softly to himself. "If I were Lucinda I should love him with my whole heart, in spite of his fifty years!"

He covered his eyes with his hand. — "I should love him!" Then he had no doubt that Lucinda did not love her husband. Whence this assumption? What right had he to form such an opinion. Heinzius, whose curiosity had been roused by the lawyer's remarks, had taken up Salomon's pamphlet, and while he studied it Otto tried to recall all the minute impressions he had gained of Lucinda's bearing and feeling towards her husband.

He was so much absorbed by this review of the past that he scarcely perceived that Emma Lersner had come into the room to lay the table for Heinzius. Heinzius, on the contrary was fully alive to the fact. He tossed the pamphlet on to the sofa, jumped up and helped the young girl to clear the table. Then he withdrew to the window and resting his elbow on the sill watched her thoughtfully. Emma did not say a word; she attributed Otto's dream-struck mood to weariness and exhaustion, and she came and went as noiselessly as an angel floating on clouds. Heinzius, who had had no experience of such quiet household care, breathed the atmosphere of sweet womanliness with unfailing rapture; it was positively intoxicating; and it is worthy of note he did not now — as when watching the fair-haired Martha — stop to analyze female beauty from an artistic point of view, but simply gazed without any æsthetic theorizing.

When the soup was steaming in the plate and Emma had left the room, Karl Theodor Heinzius, strangely enough, did not sit down at once, but went straight to the little dressing-table. For the first time for many a long year he cast a critical eye on his image in the glass.

The mirror, which hung on a nail in the plain-

est possible frame, was certainly not such as to encourage self-contemplation; the greenish glass lent a ghastly hue to the schoolmaster's pale face.

"Heinzius," he said to himself: "You are old, if not in years, certainly in hairs. Thirty-four — and this suspicious sheen of grey in both temples. Shocking!— And a little fat and flesh on those narrow cheek-bones would be an improvement! Odd! I never noticed it till to-day. But now!— Why it is disgraceful! There is my good friend Otto there who has just been through ten or twelve days on the sick-list and yet, compared with me, he looks like a drayman. Shocking, Heinzius, shocking!"

He pulled back his shoulders and straightened himself.

"'Rather narrow-chested,' the doctor told me once. I laughed at the man, but he was right — I notice it as I come up-stairs. I wonder whether I could begin gymnastics at four and thirty? They are said to work wonders . . . ."

He buttoned up his coat.

"I must own," he went on, "that my uncle, whose goods I inherited, was rather too much fatter than I! *Docti male togati:* the learned do not dress well — but this coat is almost beyond permissible limits. I might put the buttons back

another inch and a half, perhaps. But I rather suspect that a frock-coat is an impossible garment in the eyes of the metropolis. Fräulein Adele — but I did not take it amiss — laughed frankly in my face yesterday, and I fancy that even Fräulein Emma would think a short coat more suitable. The word used by the immortal Darwin applies even to our intercourse with our fellow-creatures: Adaptation. In Halldorf a frock-coat answered every purpose — in the capital I must shed it! Fate ordains that I must acquire a cut-away."

"Well, Heinzius?" asked Otto, raising himself in bed, "are you studying a tragic part, or what on earth are you doing in front of the glass?"

Heinzius blushed purple and sat down to his cold soup.

"I was considering," he said bashfully, "whether my queer costume was creditable to you — in the position you will fill after the new year. I think I owe it to you to look like other people here, though the question of expense is a serious one."

Otto laughed. "You are indeed such a friend as we read of in books. We will give our minds to the subject — not for my sake but for yours. I should not like to see you made fun of by people

who are not worthy to unloose your shoe latchet, merely because your soul soars too high to attach any importance to such superficial things."

"Oh, you rate me too highly!" cried Heinzius. "I do not at all think that it is beneath a man to give in to certain requirements of the æsthetic sense."

There was a knock at the door. Otto said: "Come in" and Fräulein Jakoby entered. Above her head peeped the lion's mane of Roderich Lund.

"And how are you getting on, Herr Wellner?" chirped Adele. "Emma tells me that the doctor talks of allowing you to get up. Thank God that the affair has turned out no worse so far! We have had a dreadful time with you and my aunt, — on my word, I have almost forgotten how to laugh.— Why, Herr Schoolmaster, that is a very sour face! Do not you like your soup? Or are we disturbing you in a meditation on the cloud crossing the moon? It is a pretty sight to see you gaping at the sky and polishing your glasses every two minutes."

"Fräulein Jakoby," said Heinzius with philosophical good temper, "the soup is excellent, and your humor is even better. I hold it no crime in you that you should prefer fun and danc-

ing to the phenomena of nature. You are yourself such a charming natural phenomenon that you can rely on being attractive without the wisdom of Pythagoras."

"That is beautifully said!" retorted Adele. "I did not understand it all but it sounded uncommonly pretty."

"But you," said Otto to the author of "Gracchus," whose hand he held: "You do not look quite yourself to-day. Your brow is clouded. What has gone wrong?"

"Nothing of any consequence."

"Your tone contradicts your words . . . Something has annoyed you?"

"Pooh — only Sunthelm."

"What?"

"He says that difficulties have arisen with regard to producing Gracchus. The manager wishes to keep the piece back for the present."

Otto nodded his head slowly.

"To keep it back!" he repeated to himself.

"Of course I attacked the baron with proper vehemence. I explained to him, shortly but clearly, that I insisted on the fulfilment of the pledge on any terms, and should take every step to secure it. God knows I was almost rude."

"Do you think it will do any good?"

"That remains to be proved. At any rate he knows what to expect!"

"*Aequam memento rebus in arduis;*" quoted Heinzius. "Courage, and *propositi tenax.* That is perfectly compatible with true stoicism. You must not excite yourself, Herr Lund, or you will spoil your productive powers."

"Now, there again is a truly oracular speech!" laughed Adele. "It is as good as a sermon to hear you! Really, Herr Wellner, from only seeing you, I should never have thought it possible that a man from Halldorf could be so tremendously learned, or wear such terrible clothes!"

Emma now arrived with the second course of the schoolmaster's meal. Heinzius involuntarily cast a deprecating glance at saucy Fräulein Adele: "Laugh at me if you will," that glance said, "but not now—not in the presence of this celestial creature." Adele, however, was only spurred to further impertinence by the good man's embarrassment and faint blush.

"Tell me, now, Herr Heinzius," she went on, as she helped her cousin: "Why do not you get married? Learned men ought always to marry. If I, now, were so lucky as to be your wife—I do not mean that I at all count on your asking me; it is only supposing—I would smarten you up in

no time, till you looked like a wax-figure in a tailor's shop. Your hair to begin with—why, I could plait it into tails!—would fall under the scissors. It would stuff a splendid pin-cushion—and it would grow thicker if it were kept short.—There, there is the moon again."

The whole party burst out laughing. Emma as heartily as the rest. For one instant the schoolmaster's eye was dim: this untimely mirth on the part of this gracious creature, whom he had till now seen in a sort of superhuman halo, was bitter to his soul. Emma observed it and checked herself, saying, with a glance at her cousin:

"Do not be vexed, Herr Heinzius."

"Vexed?" echoed Adele. "What have I said wrong I should like to know? Mercy on us, if we are to weigh every word to a turn! You must take me as I am! Why even Pröhle has been sulking with me since the day before yesterday, because I told him that the way he held his bread and butter reminded me of the hippopotamus in the Zoological Gardens. Are we all to go through the world with our heads on one side?—I am as God made me, and Herr Heinzius himself cannot change my nature."

"I would not if I could," said the schoolmaster. "Playful grace is acceptable to the Gods, and

innocent mirth is the best guarantee of a good heart, in my opinion."

"Thanks for such a fine compliment," laughed Adele making a courtesy. "Now, Emma, come. You see that as long as you look at him so sweetly Herr Heinzius cannot eat a morsel. But eating and drinking are acceptable to the Gods — heh, Herr Heinzius? — and a good appetite is the guarantee of a healthy stomach, in my opinion. Eat and enjoy yourself so as to grow fat and handsome: it will be more becoming than poetic leanness. Good-bye, Herr Wellner — by the way, Pröhle wants to know whether it will disturb you if he plays the concertina? No? Then I will let him know. — By-bye." And she danced off. Emma followed her; but Roderich stayed till Heinzius had finished his meal.

The worthy schoolmaster was not dainty, nor was Emma Lersner a bad cook. But he had no appetite to-day for anything. He presently rose, took a little knitted purse out of his leather trunk, put on his hat, and asked his patient if he could do without him for an hour or two. Otto said he could and Heinzius left the house just as Roderich Lund sat down to dinner with the Lersners.

CHAPTER II.

It was Sunday, just four weeks after the duel; Otto had returned to the Editor's office three days previously. Now, at about half-past ten in the forenoon, he was dressed to go out. He intended to call on some of his more intimate friends and patrons — on Salomon, on Doctor Lehrbach and, if time allowed, on Doctor Leopold Wolf who, during the events of the past week had been a most amiable and helpful colleague.

All was quiet at number seventy in the Sandgasse. Frau Lersner and Emma were at church with Karl Theodor Heinzius, in the improved costume on which he had spent the chief part of his ready money. Indeed he had quite lost the stamp of the pedagogue as he walked along between mother and daughter, with Frau Lersner's huge hymn-book under his arm; not that he was a very smart-looking swain even now; his snuff-colored coat had large wrinkles across the back which even Emma's careful smoothing could not altogether efface, and his trousers were an inch too long over his boots. Heinzius had noted this detail with silent disgust and mentally accused the

tailor of want of taste, without remembering for an instant that it is not difficult to pull up trousers to the desired length. So the trio had made their way devoutly to the *Spittelkirche:* Dame Lersner the very model of a humble householder; Emma, in her closely-fitting, fluffy cloth jacket and with a becoming broad-brimmed hat, looking like a spring morning in the wintry town-scene; and Heinzius, like some foreign creature which is not yet accustomed to its unwonted surroundings.

Lund too was absent. It seemed as though the affair of "Gracchus" were once more under discussion, for the baron had requested the poet to call upon him to talk it over.

Thus, when Otto had left the house, Pröhle was the only person remaining in it, for Fräulein Adele had gone off to the shop at nine.

Otto's first visit was to the editor of the Encyclopedia, by whom he was received with an air of guilty consciousness. It was not till three days ago that Otto Wellner had become aware of the loss of his mysterious packet; for Doctor Salomon, always hoping to recover it, had carefully kept the secret of its disappearance though he had not given himself a moment's peace or respite in his efforts to find some trace of it. He had put all sorts of advertisements into all

the local papers, promising absolute pardon in case any "honest person" should have opened it out of mere curiosity, offering a reward for its return, and threatening a "suspected offender" with the warning that "further steps would immediately be taken" — all in vain.

At first Otto had been greatly depressed; then he comforted himself with the reflection that, as things had turned out, he would probably never be in the position that would justify his reading the will. Still, the feeling of annoyance at such a painful desecration of a thing he had held so sacred disturbed his mind, till he confessed to himself that his memory of the beloved dead, which never could fade in his heart, was after all more sacred and more dear to him than any tangible relic. So he could alleviate the too conscientious professor's anxiety without any hypocrisy; he thanked him for all the trouble he had taken, and said that he could only blame himself for the consequences of his own oversight. So that matter was dismissed.

"And how is your reconciliation progressing?" asked Salomon. "I mean between you and Ewald. I hear from Doctor Lehrbach that you are to take the editorship of our magazine when Wolf retires. So much the better; it is a mag-

nificent opening. I have the greatest respect for your very remarkable talents which cannot fail to carry you through everything — but at four and twenty! — It is really stupendous. Well, enough of that. Wolf too has praised you up to the skies — perhaps out of a little selfishness. His time is not really up till October; if he could find no one to take his place at once he would be forced to stay on, in spite of his having come into 150,000 thalers. Aye, aye! your men of letters! They can write a pretty story now and then, or make love rhyme with dove — that suits them to a turn; but they will not do a stroke of hard work unless they are compelled. Take our great poets; put one of them into a pretty house with forty thousand marks a year! What will he do? Write a few songs at the most! Well, well, enough of that.

"So you are to be editor, and that makes your election to the Authors' club a matter of course — a necessity. Now it would be really disastrous in every way if you and Ewald were on a footing of private hostility. The encounter has surely squared accounts between you: it seems to me that the two parties might now shake hands without any grudge or bitterness."

"If Herr Ewald feels any promptings in that

direction, for my part I am quite ready. You will admit . . . ."

"Well then, I will speak about it to Herr von Tyllichau.—*Ad vocem* Ewald: you know, this evening?"

"What?"

"The first performance of his tragedy 'Sophonisba.' Frau Schrader-Kuhlemann plays the title-part."

"Then perhaps you have under-estimated the man, Doctor."

"Possibly, but it is not probable. The manager himself told Keyser that the piece was no good. The best thing in it, a great scene in the third or fourth act, is absurdly like Geibel's 'Sophonisba;' all the rest is dull and spun out. These are the manager's own words."

"But why then, in Heaven's name, does he produce the thing?"

"It is Kurt's dear Papa's influence that does it," replied Salomon. "And he does not risk much. The first performance will be crowded, in the first place because Schrader-Kuhlemann is playing in it, and also out of curiosity. To the Berlin public Ewald, you know, is what Claudius or Licinius was to Rome . . . ."

There was a ring and the landlady showed in

a visitor, so Otto took leave and set out to call on Doctor Lehrbach.

The nearer he got to his destination the more nervous and excited he became. The desperate beating of his heart warned him that the passion which ruled him had grown to a threatening height during these last weeks. Never before had he felt so unhinged when mounting the handsomely-decorated steps, never before had he trembled so much as when asking, in a husky voice, whether Doctor and Frau Lehrbach were at home to visitors. The servant was absent some little time before he brought word that "His mistress would be very happy to see Herr Wellner."

Otto found the lady in the little drawing-room where she usually received her most intimate friends; she was alone.

She stood up as he came in, with her hand on the back of a chair, dressed as usual in white, soft stuff. A beam of December sunshine, piercing the mist with an orange glow, fell on her dark hair which was gathered into a simple knot, and threw a fantastic nimbus round her handsome head. Her breath came rapidly and her voice rang deeply.

"Doctor Lehrbach is out," she said, with some hesitation, "but I would not deprive myself . . . ."

What more she said Otto did not hear. Her words had no meaning in his ears; they were a beatific sound—the murmur of dancing waters—the sweet echoes of distant music. He could only gaze; her figure seemed to stand in the midst of clouds; the room floated round him. He was far away from the turmoil of the city—on some Isle of the Blessed, or a mountain-top bathed in the glories of spring sunshine. All he knew was that she was there, that they were gazing into each other's eyes, that she understood . . . . In the anteroom ticked an antique clock; all else was silent, sleeping, dreaming . . . .

He stood rigid and spell-bound, leaning against the broad marble chimney-shelf, like the youth who is lost in endless dreaming in the castle of Morgana.

But suddenly he knew that he was not dreaming. Lucinda's arms were round his neck in a soft but close embrace; her pretty head lay on his shoulder, laughing, crying, sobbing; and with a thrill of bewildering joy, he felt the shuddering throbs that shook her slight form as a breeze shivers the still surface of a mountain tarn. She looked up into his eyes; she kissed him with a long deep kiss, as if she had forgotten all else: the world and herself—the present and the future.

He caught fire from her passion, it was irresistible. — He clasped her tightly in his arms as though he could crush her to death; he kissed her lips, her cheeks, her hands, the satin bow at her throat; he stammered out a thousand wild endearments — trembling — literally beside himself, like a madman.

Then suddenly, before he could collect himself, Lucinda was gone, like Homer's goddesses who vanish in clouds. He fancied he saw the shimmer of her white dress on the threshold,— but no, the door was shut. The love-crazed youth was standing alone, in darkness as it were, in the deserted room. He would have called her, flown after her, but he heard the servant's footstep in the passage. Then he remembered that Doctor Lehrbach might return at any moment. He was too ecstatically happy to be remorseful, but he felt that it would be impossible to look calmly and indifferently in the face of the man whose wife he had but a moment since held in his arms, as Alexander held the wife of Menelaus. The mere idea filled him with terror. No! he must recover himself, he must study the hypocrite's part before he could venture to appear before that kind and worthy friend . . . .

He quitted the house, taking leave of no one;

for hours he wandered through the streets, possessed by the one feeling which now was all of life to him. The more he yielded to the intoxication of the joy he had tasted, the more madly he longed for what he deemed happiness, and the more indifferent he became to his relations with Lehrbach. He argued with the blind logic of passion. It was Fate, he said that had brought it to pass. Lucinda loved him—loved him madly—and this alone had cast the die. Was it any fault of his if Doctor Lehrbach, misapprehending the immutable laws that govern the souls of women, had chosen to marry a girl whose heart he had never owned? Had he, Otto, ever tried to win Lucinda's favor by a single word of base seduction? That his eyes should have been eloquent, his glowing beseeching eyes, seemed to him the result of that supreme need of souls which must fulfil itself, never asking whether its means bestow happiness or inflict a wound. Thus Sophistry, as usual in such cases, cast a glamour over the past and laid plans for the future.

Fritz Pröhle meanwhile, in the Sunday silence of the empty house had taken out his polished

concertina, the confidant of all his secret hopes and woes, and had begun to play, with a crescendo of melancholy, the pretty popular air "Morgen muss ich fort von hier." (To-morrow I must go from hence.) But in the middle of the most plaintive of the variations the type-founder suddenly ceased; he had caught a familiar sound in the passage; the tap tap of a pair of little heels that was far more musical in his ears than the sweetest harmony of voice and instruments. Adele had come in from the shop, had put her hat and cape by in the wardrobe on the landing with her usual rapidity, and had gone into the sitting-room.

Pröhle sat meditating with the concertina between his knees. He was considering: Adele was alone. Now would be the time to pour out his whole heart to her, to reproach her for all the follies that he had noted with self-torturing exactitude in his diary, to picture to her all the perils which were daily closing in upon her if she did not forsake the paths of levity, and then to come forward and rescue her in her penitence — to offer her the right hand of faithful and protecting devotion!

As his thoughts took this form he glanced down at his great paws, with the thumbs thrust through the leathern loops of the concertina.

They were, to be sure, bear-like, elephantine fists! But what of that? They were all the more fitted to grasp Adele's slender hands, and the better able to protect her in the battle of life, to defend her against every attack, — against an open foe or a too insinuating friend.

Fritz Pröhle drew a deep breath; the mere thought of addressing Adele so frankly made him quake. If she should laugh at him — as he had heard her laugh! If she were to put on her face of genteel contempt and fling at him one of those stinging jests which she always had at her command.

Perhaps the air of some touching song might soften her haughty spirit. He set the door ajar a little way, and then sat down again on the creaking cane chair with a feeling of pious devotion. In a low and tender tremolo he began the tune of "Du, du, liegst mir am Herzen." (You, you, dwell in my heart, love). After playing it twice through he stopped to listen. There was not a sound in the other room. — Yes, the inner door creaked on its hinges . . . Adele was humming a tune.

"Bah!" sighed Pröhle, "it is that detestable song from *Madame Angot*. . . ." and he resignedly put the concertina by.

"It is of no use!" he growled to himself, "such

a chance may never occur again. Come what may I must know where I stand."

He walked two or three times up and down his room with a slouching gait, and then, like a man who after a long struggle has made up his mind to plunge into cold water, he went across to the door of the sitting-room.

"Come in," cried Adele's voice. "Oh! it is you? My aunt is out. Do you want anything?"

"Want? what should I want? That is to say. . . ."

"Well, out with it!" said Adele, smoothing her hair in front of the glass.

"Ah! Fräulein Adele," said the worthy type-founder, "I want to speak to you very seriously, but I see your head is full of other things. . . ."

"I — not at all; speak on. Is your water-can broken again? Or do you want some money?"

"It has nothing to do with broken cans," said Pröhle impressively. "Nor with money either — I can assure you all my care for Sunday pleasures has long since been a thing of the past!"

"Indeed? — But you were playing so beautifully just now."

"So beautifully! — But you do not know, Fräulein Jakoby, how I feel all the time. You see,

it grieves me to the heart to know that a young girl, the sweetest and best girl under the sun — I mean you, Fräulein Jakoby. . . ."

"Very flattering!" said Adele sharply, for she saw what he was driving at.

"You see," Pröhle began again, "you must not take it ill; but all that business with the gentleman . . . with Baron Anastasius I mean. . . . Take my word for it he is a d . . . d scoundrel and means you no good. He will only be the ruin of you, and you will bitterly, bitterly repent the day. . . ."

"Pray spare yourself the trouble, Herr Pröhle. I told you, only the other day, that I know very well what to do and what to leave undone."

"But that is just what you do not know," Pröhle insisted. "Tell me: Have you the faintest idea of what sort of woman that Widow Tharow is whose house you have been to two or three times? What? You are surprised I daresay! Of course, in your childlike innocence — I was sure of it! Well, that woman Tharow is a regular good-for-nothing of the very worst sort, and if Fräulein Jakoby is seen going in and out of her doors it is all up with her good name; I, Fritz Pröhle say so, and I will take my oath of it if you like!"

"Indeed," said Adele pertly. "And how do

you know, may I ask, what goes on in other folks' houses?"

"In a very simple way. I know one of the gilders at Von Düren's; her name is Martha Voss. She has been over at my shop now and then to fetch letters and tools. Well, one day, looking up from my work I saw Tyllichau, Fräulein Camilla's intended—and a pretty bridegroom he is!—stop her and put his arm round her waist. She came in as pale as death. Then I said to her she should not be so frightened; it was only his way, and he meant no harm. So then of course one thing led to another, and we made acquaintance; and afterwards, when she saw I was a decent fellow and meant well by her, she told me everything: that Tyllichau had got her to come here from Gernsheim, in a roundabout way, through that woman Tharow who pretended she wanted a companion. Well, Martha—she is but a young thing and knows nothing of the world—she never thought of any harm; she came to her place and was as happy and gay as a lark till at last her eyes were opened. Then she made no ceremony; she ran right off and was very near doing herself a mischief. . . ."

"God knows what your Martha had got into her head," said Adele with a sarcastic shrug.

"Frau Tharow receives the very best society; and as for Herr von Sunthelm, he is a highly-respectable man who patronizes and protects every one — Herr Lund for instance. — And I cannot see why I am never to have any fun, but just to mope myself to death.—I stand behind a counter from morning till night; I have no money to spend in amusements; and a good-natured old gentleman comes and says: 'Would you like to go to the play?' or 'would you like to learn English?'—There is an English class at Frau Tharow's. You may know that, before you run the woman down so."

"Oh! yes—I know," said Pröhle desperately. "An English class! The police ought to pack her off to the house of correction, with her English class!"

"You know nothing about it.— At any rate I am doing nothing wrong; and as to whether it is the fashion for young ladies who are strictly looked after to go now and then to a concert or a play with an old uncle—much I care! I do not care five straws for what people say — and it cannot possibly matter to you, Herr Pröhle, where or with whom I take my amusements! Or are you my keeper and guardian?"

"No,—but . . . ."

"Well! But . . . ."

"But I love you," Pröhle said. "I love you truly, more than I can tell you. And I cannot bear to see you blindly . . . ."

Adele tossed her head impatiently.

A passionate shudder shook the stalwart type-founder, and in the next instant the enamored giant, overcome by his feelings, was kneeling at her feet; he had seized both her hands and hid his face in her rustling skirts, sobbing violently.

"Fräulein Jakoby," he gasped out with difficulty, "I can bear it no longer, I cannot bear it. You are killing me, Fräulein Jakoby—Oh! if only you knew how I loved you—if only you knew . . . ."

Adele was startled by this vehement outbreak; the consciousness of being the object of such a mighty passion had its effect.

"But pray, pray," she began more kindly. "What are you doing, Herr Pröhle? Get up; it is dreadful to see you so. God above us! but I cannot help it if I have taken your fancy! Be reasonable, Herr Pröhle."

"Promise, swear, that you will get rid of that horrible man!" cried Pröhle in despair. "If you go on like this—you will ruin yourself, Fräulein Jakoby." The expression was an unlucky one;

it revived her defiance; with a hasty movement Adele snatched away her hand.

"Leave me alone," she said sharply. "You have no right to speak to me in this way. For the future I forbid such offensive comments. I can do, or not do, just what I please." And she turned her back on him.

Pröhle rose slowly and feebly.

"Certainly," he said. "I cannot hinder anything you may be determined to do. Go your own way, Fräulein Jakoby. You need never fear that I shall tell any tales of what I see or hear. Never! I should feel the shame in my very soul if I were to live to see the world point its finger at Fräulein Jakoby. But one thing I promise: if ever I see you again with that lying scoundrel, wherever it may be, I will take him by the throat with these hands of mine, and throttle him till he never breathes again! I will smash his brain out of his skull!—And if after that Fritz Pröhle is dragged before a judge you—you, will know whose fault it has all been: Yours—yours, with your levity, and your vanity, which makes you think yourself too good to be the honest wife of a decent working-man; which makes you prefer to parade the streets as a rich vagabond's mistress!"

A shrill laugh was Adele's only reply. Pröhle rushed out of the room like a maniac.

CHAPTER III.

THE following Wednesday was a red-letter day for Heinzius. The first post brought Wellner a note from Doctor Lehrbach which ran as follows:

"My dear Herr Wellner, I hear from Salomon that Herr Heinzius' stay with you is not merely a friendly visit, as I at first supposed — though I was surprised that a schoolmaster should be able to leave his duties in the middle of the busiest term. I have now learnt how matters stand. Herr Heinzius has shown an independence of opinion and a strength of character which I highly esteem. Professor Salomon seems to have taken upon himself the duty of providing for Herr Heinzius and was calling on me some days since, for the third time, in reference to the subject. His idea seemed to me a happy one, and all depends on what Herr Heinzius himself thinks of it. Your promotion to the place of editor leaves the secretaryship vacant. If Herr Heinzius can recon-

cile it to his dignity as a man and a schoolmaster to become subordinate to his former pupil, the place is open to him. The matter is as good as settled with Herr von Düren. All that is necessary is that Herr Heinzius should call on the head-clerk of that department, in whose hands the affair virtually rests. If this arrangement can in any way contribute to your satisfaction and that of Herr Heinzius, no one will be better pleased than your most truly,

"Lehrbach."

Would Heinzius accept? Dignity and self-respect had a nobler meaning for him than the commonplace sense in which they taint the blood of ordinary beings. The petty side of vanity was unknown to him; he was proud only to those who wanted him to recant his opinions, or to humiliate himself under the yoke of despotic authority.

The schoolmaster was quite radiant as he made his toilet after Otto's departure for the office; and then he went across to Frau Lersner and Emma. They were astonished to see the "learned gentleman," who commonly sat studying till noon, dressed to go out by nine o'clock. Heinzius seemed to have grown broader and stouter under the influence of his good fortune;

his clothes certainly hung less like drapery on his bony frame, and even the new standing collar he had put on bore the stamp of manly dignity.

He briefly told them what had occurred, and that he was on his way first to receive the insignia of his office from the head-clerk of the department, and then to pay his respects, as in duty bound, to Doctors Lehrbach and Salomon.

"Aye, Fräulein Emma," he added with a significant smile, "Learning, you see, has only to knock: it is everywhere welcomed with open arms, even when its representative is so far from being brilliant. The least infusion of indigo is enough to give a hue to whole vats full. . . ."

"You are much too modest," said the girl, and Heinzius blushed.

Fully persuaded that Emma Lersner had taken a liking for him he found courage to invite the whole family to an entertainment that evening. The great event of his installation must be celebrated in style. Heinzius wanted to give a festivity which should be long remembered and talked of in the house in the Sandgasse — a festivity confined of course, strictly to their own circle. Frau Lersner and Emma, his dear Otto, the type-founder — whose delightful concertina was to add to the pleasures of the meeting — Roderich Lund,

and finally the pale, sad-looking girl Martha Voss, whom Emma, at Pröhle's request, had so kindly welcomed a few days since: these were the guests Heinzius proposed to invite. As to the nature of the entertainment the host was as yet undecided; he begged Frau Lersner to give her mind to the subject. In his humble opinion punch — if the punch were not too strong — was one of the greatest treats vouchsafed to man; with a comfortable supper beforehand, of course; — if Frau Lersner could suggest anything better he was open to conviction; he left it to her and begged her advice and help, since he, as a bachelor, had no experience of entertaining such esteemed guests.

Frau Lersner consented, promised to invite Adele who had no previous engagement for the evening, and warmly repeated her congratulations, offering him her hand.

The ex-schoolmaster left the house a proud and beaming man, brimming over with regard for Lehrbach, for Salomon, for Herr von Düren, and for the swarming human multitude around him. The ceremony with the chief clerk consisted only in the signature of an agreement already drawn up.

After this important detail was settled Heinzius went down to the type-foundry, to secure

Pröhle's company at the evening's festivity. But for various reasons Pröhle was very much out of sorts, and he received his well-meaning visitor anywise rather than pleasantly. However, when he heard that Adele Jakoby was to be of the party, his stiff, short manner melted with all his vows of heroism: Pröhle had sworn to himself that he would have nothing more to say to Adele; but now — where were his manly pride and iron purpose? Now he had the tempting chance of sitting with her till past midnight and he seized it at once — a slave to his passion and longing.

Doctor Salomon, on whom Heinzius next called, was out, so that by ten o'clock he was standing, radiant with happiness, in the lawyer's room.

"You have come only just in time to catch me, I am sorry to say," cried Lehrbach, "for in twenty minutes I must be in court. Well, how are you getting on? I conclude from your satisfied smile that my plan met your views."

"The business is settled," replied Heinzius. "I have only come, my dear and respected Sir, to express my humble thanks."

"Not the slightest occasion, my good friend. It is I who ought to thank you; I am glad of your visit. Tell me, what is your young friend

doing? It is a pity that I missed him last Sunday. By the way, Wolf tells me that he is much struck by his excellent judgment in the matter of the illustrations. That confirms my opinion of him: Otto Wellner is a thorough artist by nature."

"Oh yes! Till about a year and half ago he painted a good deal himself."

"I never heard a word about it."

"He does not like to talk about it. He had soaring dreams at twenty, and his sketch-book contained some very charming things. He was as happy! — Then Gauthier Naroslaw, the great painter, came to Halldorf and spent a couple of weeks there, making studies of peasant-life. I, thinking very highly of Otto's talents, took an opportunity of showing Gauthier a few of his sketches, thinking that Otto would never know. You know Gauthier; honor itself, but severe, very severe; and he happened to be tired, and perhaps I had made a bad selection. In short, he said something in his curt, surly way about amateurishness, and Otto, who was in the garden below the open window, happened to overhear him. That was an end of his dabbling in art. He threw his drawings in the fire — all but three which I had at my house and would not give up."

"It is odd," said the lawyer. "Have you the drawings with you?"

"Yes — at home."

"If you would let me see them at some time, I should be extremely interested. I must confess to you that Otto always gives me the impression of a man made to become an artist. I have often watched him narrowly; 'he is either a poet,' I have said to myself, 'or a painter, for he feels the picturesque keenly and deeply.' I have an eye for such things; besides I find that, as a rule, your true bungler is not in such a hurry to destroy his attempts. — Talking of bunglers reminds me of the youngest première at the Stadt-theatre — by the way, who is the queer fellow who lodges on the same floor with you and Wellner? A type-founder or something of the kind. Doctor Salomon mentioned his name. . . ."

"You mean Pröhle?"

"To be sure, that is the man. Well, he must be a crazy fool! At the first performance of 'Sophonisba' — I do not know if you happen to have heard of it — he and some other working-men were standing in the top gallery, and as soon as the curtain fell after the first act he made such a diabolical row, the others following his example, that the police had to interfere. It is true that the

piece is not worth a fig, but to make a political matter of it is really too much: 'Down with the rascal! Away with this conservative trash!' and that kind of thing.—However, I hear they made short work with them. The matter has been taken up as a demonstration of the socialist party, and you may as well tell Pröhle that, if he will take my advice, he will sing small for a time. The police are in no mood for jesting with the democrats."

"I will warn him," said Heinzius. "Sophonisba? Is not that by the same Ewald that gave our friend Otto such a lesson?"

"Yes, to be sure. In spite of packed stalls, the piece would have been damned if Pröhle and his friends had held their peace. As it was, of course they roused an opposition; the claque were more vigorous than ever; the interest of the public was enhanced in the expectation of a further riot. In short, Herr Ewald was twice recalled at the end of the performance, and there even happened to be a laurel-wreath handy. Well, I must beg you to excuse me, I must be off. If you are at any time in this neighborhood. . . ."

Heinzius bowed himself out.

"That fellow Pröhle!" he muttered to himself. "Who would have thought it of him. Ha! now I know what he meant by avenging Lund!"

Heinzius walked briskly forward; he cast aside the impression left by the type-founder's folly and everything that could disturb his equanimity, and lived for the moment entirely in the present. He even detected in himself some promptings to extravagance and luxury. In a flower-shop at the corner of the Corn market he bought four—yes, four—little bouquets, at a mark and a half a piece, (36 cents) to offer to the ladies at his soirée. If he had obeyed the impulse of his heart he would have allowed himself to buy only one—one for Emma. But that would never do; that would attract attention, would look suspicious! So he walked proudly home, loaded with his four nosegays, and firmly convinced that he could show reason for his recklessness at the day of judgment.

After dining with the Lersners, and listening with the greatest delight to the programme suggested by the good woman for the evening, he retired to his room—to the quiet nook, made bright by hope, which in a few days he could call really his own; for Otto, on his promotion, after the first of January could no longer occupy such a humble lodging.

He took a sheet of paper out of his writing-case and sketched a short but impressive address,

to be spoken this evening to his guests at the "Thorn-bush" restaurant. Every word was weighed again and again so diligently did he scratch out and write in.

In point of fact this address aimed at being something more than a mere toast or after-supper speech, in which a few brilliant and effective touches of antithesis are the most that is ever expected. The budding sub-editor desired to give utterance, under cover of generalities, to his personal hopes; he wanted to hint that the place he should now fill was no less honorable than lucrative, and he hoped to express to Fräulein Emma by his floral tribute, how sweet, how admirable, how perfectly angelic he thought her.

The task was by no means easy of achievement, so it is not to be wondered at that darkness was closing in before the most decisive allusions had found fit expression in appropriate verse. At length, however, the last line was finished and neatly written out, and with a deep sigh of relief Karl Theodor Heinzius rose, saying to himself: "*Quod bonum, faustum felixque sit!* If this does not do it I do not know how Pyramus set to work to breathe his love to Thisbe."

It was now dark; the clock struck seven. Fritz Pröhle left the foundry to hurry home and

attire himself, as was but seemly, in his Sunday suit. His way led him down the Louisenstrasse, past Toussaint and Gerold's shop. He glanced in; there stood Adele, as busy as possible—so pretty and rosy that the worthy type-founder wondered how he could ever have thought of giving her up.

Pröhle turned off through one of the little passages, known only to those familiar with the topography of the city, which sneak through and under the tall houses, and connect the main thoroughfares surreptitiously, so to speak. Here there was a little-frequented tavern, the favorite resort of a few small tradesmen who had money to spend and liked a quiet corner. On the steps that led up to the narrow, curtained entry, stood a gentleman of aristocratic appearance talking to a commissionaire to whom he had just handed something. As he turned Pröhle recognized Baron von Sunthelm.

"I will wait here," he said in an undertone. "Do the thing as quietly as possible."

The man went; he held a note between his finger and thumb. In that instant the whole thing was as clear as day to the type-founder. He hurried after the commissionaire the few steps back into the street; his suspicions were justified

—the messenger went in through the glass door at Toussaint and Gerold's.

Then all his tears and sighs on Sunday, and all his threats and warnings had been in vain! Pröhle never stopped to reflect that this particular incident afforded no substantial proof whatever, and that Adele might very possibly have made up her mind to repel the old rake's attentions for the future. He was conscious of nothing but blind surging rage, the infernal pangs of jealousy; and before he knew what he was about or how it had happened, he was standing in the side alley, face to face with the baron.

"What do you want of Fräulein Jakoby?" he said in a husky whisper. Anastasius had involuntarily started backwards at the type-founder's sudden address.

"I do not understand you," he said politely. "Who are you? What right have you to speak to me in that tone?"

"Wretch!" cried Pröhle, beside himself with fury, "I will show you what right I have! Perhaps you think that because you write *von* before your name and never need do a stroke of work you have a patent right to trample respectable girls in the gutter?"

He raised his fist, and the baron turned pale;

that cyclopean fist looked very capable of smashing the few real teeth that remained in his jaws, without any particular effort; at the same time the fellow had clutched his waistcoat.

"Are you out of your senses?" stuttered Anastasius. "I will shout for help . . . ."

"See that!" Pröhle went on, holding his massive hand close under the baron's nose. "With these four knuckles of mine I will crack your skull like a walnut if you ever again dare to come sneaking after the girl! You contemptible wretch!"

"But, good God! This is . . . ."

"Hold your jaw and do not stand shivering there, you miserable object. For the present I do not mean to soil my hands by spoiling your silly face—you old pantaloon! I only warn you: Look out for yourself."

At this moment the commissionaire reappeared on the scene, and, seeing him, Anastasius took heart.

"Call a policeman," he panted, quaking with nervous alarm. "This man has attacked me in the public street . . . . It is abominable . . . ."

"What? That man?" said the commissionaire —"Why, it is Pröhle! That is not like him . . . ."

"You know him then? So much the better. He shall remember me as sure as I live."

"Do you remember *me*," retorted the type-founder; and shaking his fist once more at his foe, he turned back towards the Louisenstrasse. At the other end of the alley he saw two firemen on their rounds, and this he felt to be an awkward detail, for, as he very well knew, Baron von Sunthelm's name worked like a spell on every official in the capital.

"I have given him due warning," he said to himself. "He has only to give me in charge! I will let him know what I think of his mean tricks."

Then it struck him that this would never do; he must not drag Fräulein Jakoby's name into the quarrel. But then the baron too, must surely be anxious to hush matters up. He was a married man, long past fifty, and much looked up to in fashionable circles. He could not possibly confess . . . No, no; it was quite certain that Anastasius would take no steps against him . . . At most he might complain privately — perhaps he would tell Herr von Düren . . . Pröhle shrugged his shoulders.

"Come what may," he muttered to himself, "I could not keep my hands off him. And it did me good, on my soul, to tell that pompous villain the whole, real truth for once!"

By this time he had got back to the shop, and

looking in, he saw Adele putting on her hat. His blood boiled in his veins. Now he would see for himself whether she was prepared to do the bidding of this lean old Don Juan. She came out. He bowed to her — quite shyly, almost humbly, like a beggar bowing to a queen.

"Are you coming my way?" she said pleasantly. Fritz Pröhle breathed more freely.

"With your permission," he said, tremulous with pleasure. He felt like a man respited at the foot of the scaffold.

They walked together across the corn market, Pröhle only speaking a word now and then. Fräulein Jakoby only chattered the faster, on every conceivable subject. The type-founder was in bliss. He had forgotten everything: her cruelty, her frivolity, the baron's billet-doux and the disagreeable collision in the alley.

By half-past nine punctually all the party had collected in Frau Lersner's sitting-room, and all in the best of humors. Only Martha, who still felt herself a stranger to the intimate little circle, was more silent than ever, and Otto was very quiet. They set out together for the "Thornbush" restaurant — Frau Lersner and the three girls wearing the flowers presented by their spendthrift host; Pröhle carrying the walnut-wood case

that contained the concertina; the proud Amphitryon with his rhymed address in his breast-pocket.

The little table was laid in the private room; Adele undertook to place the company.

"We can sit alternately!" she exclaimed decisively. "Each gentleman has a lady. You, Herr Heinzius, as the oldest and most honored, must take my aunt; Herr Wellner must have Emma; Herr Lund, as a poet, deserves the beauty —Martha; well, and I am best pleased to have Herr Pröhle. So we are all well sorted and can be happy each in his own way."

Heinzius was not at first best pleased with the honor assigned to him, but was comforted when Emma took her seat at his left hand. The bill of fare was simple enough: A roast joint with concomitants and a sweet dish to follow, and bottled Bavarian beer or Mosel wine, according to taste.

When the meat was on the table and the waiter had left the room Karl Theodor rose and begged in a trembling voice for ten minutes hearing.

"Oh!" cried Adele, "but the supper will get cold!"

Frau Lersner, to whom the whole affair had a strain of solemnity, glanced reprovingly at her

forward little niece. But Heinzius at once declared that the last thing he wished was to interfere with the pleasure and comfort of his esteemed guests; he would wait till Fräulein Adele thought that a propitious moment had arrived.

"Then you will wait a long time," laughed Adele helping herself abundantly to fruit sauce.

"You know," said Frau Lersner soothingly, "that we really are tired and hungry."

"I should think so," said Adele. "So let us eat first, and then we can hear what the new mainstay of the 'Glocke' has to say."

Heinzius was somewhat dashed by this postponement, and it was with perceptible absence of mind that he eat a small slice of the noble leg of mutton. At last Adele had satisfied her appetite; she laid down her fork, and seeing that the others were all sitting expectant, she exclaimed with profane vehemence:

"Now then, fire away!"

Heinzius again rose, unrolled his manuscript and began in a shaky voice:

> "All hail to those who, on life's tossing sea,
> Thrashed by the roaring storms of spiteful Fate,
> While, all too often, strange and adverse forms
> Come stealing, ghost-like, from impending clouds. . . .

Here the waiter came in to clear the table and

change the plates. Otto and Emma signed to him to leave the room; but either he did not understand, or he thought the duties of his office of more importance than the schoolmaster's iambics. Heinzius again sat down and his face flushed crimson.

"Do not you see, waiter, that the gentleman is delivering a lecture gratis?" said Adele in a tone of mock reproof. This wounded Heinzius to the quick. He would have learned his lovely address by heart if time had allowed; but a hundred and eighty lines! it had been impossible. The poor man thought it his duty, under this covert sting from Adele, to offer his guests some explanation.

"Fräulein Jakoby is perhaps right," he ended. "Even the rhapsodies of the Ancients were spoken from memory. Reading an address must destroy the illusion. I shall therefore give up my well-meant effort, and restrict myself to bidding all my guests most heartily welcome. Your very good health!"

Every one gladly clinked glasses with him and he, well content with himself, emptied his sparkling tumbler. At the same time it was no moral conviction, nor even a regard for the requirements of illusion, that induced him to withhold his effu-

sion, but simply his increasing dread of Adele's sarcastic tongue.

"To-morrow perhaps, at home," said Emma presently, "you will give us the article to read, will you not?"

"It is poetry," said Heinzius, radiant with satisfaction. "Certainly — with pleasure . . . . If you are interested in it, I shall feel honored."

The festivity then took its course. Fritz Pröhle, who did not spare the wine, was in the seventh heaven. Adele was more amiable than usual; she did not tease him at all, whether it was that she felt bound to pour some balm into his burning wounds or that Heinzius seemed a more promising subject.

Roderich's behavior was decidedly singular. The presence of the fair-haired Martha with her sad, drooping eyes, seemed to have transformed the man who generally dwelt apart, and exclusively in the realm of his political or poetical dreams. To-day he was as bright and eager as a lively child that dances through fields and woods, chasing butterflies and gathering flowers.

Suddenly — it was by this time nearly midnight, and the punch-bowl was more than two-thirds empty — he exclaimed enthusiastically:

"But you can hardly have an idea how beau-

tiful you are. You do not belong to this debased age but to Greece in the time of Pericles!"

To which Martha replied:

"I do not understand."

But the less the young girl seemed to follow the erratic flights of his fancy, the more eagerly and wildly he tried to take her by storm.

"You do not understand!" he cried. "Nonsense! Aphrodite might say that if she could hear our learned twaddle. But it is our way now-a-days: our school pedantry clings to us even when we soar up to cradle our enraptured spirits in the dewy ether."

The bowl had no doubt some share in the production of this fit of inspiration; but the first cause lay deeper: the author of "Gracchus" had been charmed at first sight by Martha, and though he had hitherto regarded all women merely as models for his poetical personages, he now had succumbed to the charm of feminine grace and beauty, and had flung himself like a maniac, head over heels, into the whirlpool of new sensations which made him feel so happy, so triumphant, and so free. Martha, for her part, was anxious and embarrassed; but her natural instinct at once felt the difference between this reckless, stormy spontaneity, and the commonplace adulation which Herr von Tyllichau

had bestowed on her before the full horrors of his treachery had dawned upon her. She felt herself rehabilitated, received again into the ranks of respectability; for till now she had been oppressed by a dull sense of being condemned forever to shame and repentance for not having seen through the young baron's wiles. This moral process was at the same time the very best auxiliary of Roderich's aspirations. A warmer breath of spring stirred Martha's forlorn heart, and it was stronger than the secret melancholy of a past time, or the bitter disappointments of the last few weeks. She could smile, and her eye sparkled more brightly and happily; she felt as though a remnant of her early home had been restored to her. She could have held out a grateful hand to them one and all, even to impertinent Adele.

At about one in the morning they separated, all in the best of humors; Heinzius, because Fräulein Emma had taken the manuscript as they said good-night in the passage; Roderich in thinking of Martha; Pröhle, because all that had come between him and Adele seemed to have floated away on the waves of blissful oblivion.

Even Otto had brightened visibly in the simple and unpretentious intimacy of a festivity so far removed from all that was torturing his senses

and brain. Emma Lersner, only, was not altogether sincere in her good-natured interest in the schoolmaster's verses. She felt — she was sure, that Otto had been living under the burden of a secret for some days past, and the idea weighed upon her. . . . Whatever that secret might be, it made him unhappy, and oh! to see him happy, what sacrifice would she not gladly have made!

CHAPTER IV.

THE following Saturday was the fifteenth of December; the day fixed for the marriage of Tyllichau and Camilla.

Otto Wellner's invitation had reached him late; not, in fact till the morning after the supper at the "Thorn-bush." From this he inferred that there was a hostile feeling against him which his unfailing advocate Dr. Lehrbach had found some difficulty in combating. His affair with Kurt Ewald — for this hostility could have no other foundation — would seem then still to be a grievance, although Von Düren, in spite of Lehrbach's prophecies, had not hitherto wasted a single word on the subject. These reflections somewhat embittered Otto's feeling; it was disagreeable to have

to fight his way afresh each time into the house, and he was almost ready to make some excuse for declining. However, the thought that he would there see the lady of his adoration, speak to her, and hear perhaps some word of promise from her lips, was stronger than the impulse of offended pride.

The wedding was to take place at three in the *Hedwigs Kirche;* the dinner-hour was six; at ten there was to be dancing.

Otto was putting the finishing touches to his toilet, in which Heinzius, who still kept up the traditions of the sick-nurse, was giving his assistance, when Pröhle came into the room.

"You, at this hour?" said Otto surprised.

"Yes, I have got a holiday till further notice," said the type-founder.

"How is that?"

"His Highness the Head of the Firm turned me off this morning."

"I hope not for. . . ."

"Thank you—but so it is. He ordered me before him as if he were a Pasha, and I stood like a snivelling boy. First he preached a long jobation about 'Sophonisba' and the row in the gallery. He did me the favor to explain that a working-

man ought to regard everything that was done by the son of a rich capitalist as heaven-sent and divine. You understand, of course — not in so many words. . . ."

"And he turned you off for that."

"For that? nay. That was only introductory. Then came the second chapter. It was that fellow who some time since — Sunthelm, I mean, who came hunting you down — I cannot bear the man, for wherever he sees a girl. . . . Well, that is a personal matter. The long and short of it is that this Sunthelm put my back up the other day and I said to him — quite civilly, of course — 'you blackguard,' said I, 'if I catch you at these tricks again I will give you one on your nob that will cost you an ugly tumble!' So then the lying old villain goes off to the chief and tells him that I attacked him like a highwayman, out of sheer insolence and socialist grudge. The mean cowardly rascal! — And that I had declared that all the lot of those fine gentry were to be brought to the gallows sooner or later, and that Von Düren especially was one of those aimed at! Well, the chief very naturally thought that a fellow like that, who writes *von* before his name and styles himself baron, must be speaking the truth; for Düren himself is an honest man, I will say that for him.

'In consideration of all these facts,' says he lifting his brows; 'In consideration of all these facts, you will see. . . .' I did not see it at all, of course; but I got my warning in due form. He flung a month's pay down on the table; I am to show myself no more; he cannot keep socialist agitators in his employment! The same thing has happened to three or four others in the bookbinding shop, for underhand plotting or whatever he called it. So now we may sit still and wait to see who will pick us up. I am in a bad way, for my line of business is as full as a herring-barrel."

"It is a sad thing for you," observed the schoolmaster.

"It is a dreadful thing! If I cannot get work I must starve."

"Time will show. Something may turn up. And you really had no squabble with the gentleman?"

"Oh! just a trifling row! But for the rascal to play the sneak like that! — By Heaven! I owe him one — and I will pay it as sure as my name is Fritz Pröhle."

The dialogue grew vehement. Pröhle stormed and railed at the middle classes with his usual violence; Heinzius, while he wiped the dust off Otto's best hat, bewailed the discontent of the

human heart; and Otto tried to mollify the type-founder, and above all to convince him that, with his crude socialist views of life, he was simply groping in the dark. Pröhle, however, was not a man to be convinced by argument; he took offence at it indeed, and with a few cutting sarcasms he retired, in a very bad humor, to his own room.

Twenty minutes later Otto Wellner was in a hackney-carriage on his way to the church, where he arrived exactly as the bridal pair were getting out of their dashing vehicle.

To the right and left stood a closely-packed crowd, eager to see the tall and singularly handsome bridegroom, and the fair-haired bride in her lace and jewels. As there was a line of six or seven carriages behind that of the young couple, Otto paid his driver and got out to walk the few yards to the entrance of the church. A servant of faultless demeanor threw open the door of a landau with a gorgeous coat of arms; Herr von Düren and his wife slowly crossed the pavement to the steps. The lady was about to lay her hand, holding a handsome lace fan, on her husband's arm when a diabolical uproar rose from various places in the throng. Groaning, howling, hissing — with evil names shouted at Von Düren

himself. It was quite clear that this was an organized demonstration.

Otto, who had paused in horror, near one of the pillars of the portico, at once understood its source and purport. The news of Pröhle's dismissal and that of his companions in misfortune, who were all known to be adherents of the extreme radical party, had spread like wild-fire among the men employed by the publisher, and in the printing houses adjoining. Above half of them were of the same political creed and they had taken up this dismissal as a challenge. Led by a few of the boldest, they had left their work to make the most of such a favorable opportunity for a public protest against the master's mode of action, and had been joined by numerous other advocates of rebellion and discontent.

George von Düren stood still for a few seconds as this outbreak of hostile feeling arrested his attention. He glanced at the assembled mob with a look of pained surprise. At this hour of all others, when the carriages of his guests were crowding to the church, when he was on the very point of seeing his daughter stand before the altar, he hardly felt equal to meeting this brutal demonstration with calm indifference or defiance. This transient hesitation was the signal for another

and more vehement uproar, especially as the police were not present in any efficient force.

"Down with him, down with the money-grubbers!" shouted a deep voice.

"He shall do penance yet!" cried a second.

"And take back the men he has turned off!" howled a third. And again there rose a stormy discord of yells, abuse, and foul threats.

Otto Wellner, feeling the liveliest sympathy for the victim of this attack, who had turned very pale, and forgetting everything that had annoyed him lately, involuntarily stepped forward with an air and gesture as though he thought he could quell the roaring mass. Von Düren, however, had by this time collected himself. He walked forward, holding his head very high — with pride and contempt in every feature.

"And who the devil is he?" asked one of the crowd, pointing to Otto who stood with uplifted hand.

"What, don't you know him?" said a machinist, all red with rust. "That is Wellner, who taught that lazy lout Ewald, the other day, what a socialist is like."

"Wellner!" said one and another with much curiosity; for the history of the duel had become known, with every conceivable variation, in the

uttermost ends of the city and Otto had a reputation, even wider than Dr. Lehrbach had supposed, as the hero of his party. Thus, in less than no time, the demonstrations of hostility to Herr von Düren were turned into an act of homage to the "brave champion of Freedom." Loud cheers hailed him on all sides.

"Hurrah for Wellner, the defender of our rights! Three cheers — hurrah!"

"Otto Wellner, the people's hero! hip, hip, hurrah!" and the most excited were prepared to lift him on their shoulders and carry him in triumph through the streets.

Wellner, thunder-struck by this unexpected change in the aspect of affairs, almost fled into the church; but the crowd outside continued to shout his name with fanatical vehemence, till the police, who had hurried up, put an end to the tumult.

Otto had no idea how it had all happened. The ridiculous fatality that had again and inevitably led to his being branded as the representative of the revolutionary party was almost fiendish. The force and cogency of the arguments displayed to him in Salomon's interesting essay had never struck him more vividly than just now, after this disagreeable incident.

He made his way in a thoughtful mood to the

space to the left of the altar, where the gentlemen of the party were shaking hands in silent greeting, while the ladies stood in a group to the right.

Here he found Herr von Düren, looking fixedly across the church, but still pale. Though Otto passed close to the publisher and bowed to him with rather elaborate politeness, George von Düren's face showed no sign. He completely ignored the young man — so much so that some of the bystanders looked at each other quite abashed, and Doctor Lehrbach, who greeted Wellner with his usual heartiness, whispered to him in great surprise: "Why, what is the meaning of this?"

Otto felt himself change color from red to white more than once. The deliberate intention on Von Düren's part was so unmistakable that Otto felt that he could not possibly ignore it.

"I cannot imagine," he whispered back to Lehrbach. But this was not the truth, for he was fully conscious that this marked rudeness was the outcome of the scene in front of the church.

At this moment Salomon came in.

"What on earth are you thinking of?" he whispered with reproachful wrath. "I am as tolerant as most men, but I must say that such a demonstration — and on such an occasion as this — is beyond all reason or endurance."

"What demonstration?" asked Otto with a frown.

"Merciful Heaven! . . . " began Salomon impatiently.

"Have I caused any demonstration?" Otto went on. "I must beg you to ascertain the facts before you pronounce judgment."

"Hush, gentlemen, softly," warned Lehrbach.

But two more of the company who had just come in were full of the subject.

"Under the circumstances I can do no less than withdraw," said Otto turning to Lehrbach.

"Under what circumstances?" Otto gave him a short sketch of the facts.

"But my dear fellow," said the lawyer, "under those circumstances of course you can do no less than remain! I, for one, am absolutely convinced that such a preposterous and bearish want of tact was the last thing you could mean; and what will be the natural inference of the rest of the party if you so suddenly abandon your position? They will simply say: 'Aha! he only put in an appearance in order to make a scandal, and now that he has succeeded in that he takes himself off!' That your usual conduct is diametrically opposed to such an idea, that the whole hypothesis is monstrously absurd, will strike no one.—Rumor, as is

well known, is always busiest with the wildest tales. So, for your own sake — as well as for mine — stay."

By this time most of the bystanders had fixed their eyes on Otto with ill-disguised indignation, and he felt a spirit of defiance rising within him; it was in obedience to this, rather than to oblige his friend, that he replied shortly: "Very well. I stay."

But another motive had had its weight: the sight of Lucinda. In white again, but more elegant, beautiful, and enchanting than ever, she sat with her hands folded in her lap and her eyes cast down, as though she dared not meet the gaze of the man on whose shoulder her head had rested in that blissful hour of utter abandonment. His eye followed every line of her figure with rapturous admiration; he forgot the unpleasant whispers of the company, her father's supercilious coldness, and the wild turmoil of the mob outside. The whole world might surge and roar around him: if only she might be his — that glorious, only woman; if only he might bear her away to some distant isle of the gods! . . . .

He was lost in fond dreams . . . .

At this moment Frau von Düren came out of the sacristy where she had been with Camilla;

her eyes were red with tears. As soon as she had taken her seat the Gothic door was thrown open and the couple, escorted by Von Tyllichau's bachelor friends and a troop of bridesmaids, walked in procession along the flower-strewn nave, and, from another door, came the priest, a tall, grave man, looking almost ominously solemn in his flowing robes. He took his place behind the altar-rails, while the bridal train made their way round the church and up the middle passage.

Eric von Tyllichau was as pale as death. The man, frivolous as he was, had the emotional temperament which is really and deeply shaken on important occasions and at critical moments; but the impression rarely lasted longer than the incident that had made it. At this instant, walking up the church behind Camilla, he was convinced that he was marrying her out of pure and unselfish love; he would cherish her faithfully; all his past life, with its follies and infidelities, was cast behind him. If Mephistopheles could have read the heart of this earnest-looking bridegroom he might have rubbed his hands with satisfaction, for behind the high-sounding profession and promise lay the brand-mark: Instability.

Camilla was the very image of a happy bride, and looked almost more sunny than on the day

of her betrothal. She had no eyes for what was going on around her; she saw only the tall priest, whose stern, puritanical countenance was to her as the face of an angel of promise, an emissary of the Almighty sent to admit her to a life of endless sunshine.

The party took their places while a soft rolling voluntary was played on the organ, and as soon as the last chords had died away the priest opened the service with a short and eloquent address. He emphasized the solemn importance of the act, and painted a picture of married life as being, even under the happiest conditions, liable to the vicissitudes of human existence, and never wholly exempt from trial and troubles.

Camilla's blue eyes were raised to the speaker's face as he thus described the thorns on the path where she could discern nothing but roses. Her glance was radiant and an innocent smile parted her lips; a smile that seemed to say: "I do not understand what you mean, but I know that you will join us to all eternity so I can listen to you; your voice sounds to me like harmony from Heaven."

It was otherwise with Eric von Tyllichau; his lips twitched suspiciously and a moist dimness veiled his bright and eager gaze.

"He has tears in his eyes," whispered Eleonora von Sunthelm, lightly touching her next neighbor.

"He is such a good fellow," said the lady addressed.

The priest asked the usual questions. The bridegroom's "Yes" was hardly audible, but Camilla's reply, if somewhat tremulous, was clear and distinct. Then they exchanged rings. Again the organ sounded, but now louder and more full; the priest gave the blessing, and repeated the Lord's Prayer — the ceremony was over. In the next instant Camilla was clasped in her sobbing mother's arms.

Herr von Düren, a man averse to public effusion, would not even wish the young couple joy in the crowded church, and all embracing, hand shaking and congratulation was postponed till the party should be at home again.

"Come," said Lehrbach to Wellner, who still stood leaning against a pillar when several of the guests had departed: "I will keep near you or you might still fall a prey to a foolish fit of ill-humor, and run away from us. There is room for you in my carriage."

Otto tried to excuse himself: He would not expose himself to the possibility of being dismissed from the house by Von Düren.

"I will see to that," said the lawyer. "Trust to me. Besides, Herr von Düren has something else to think about just now, and one man is overlooked among a hundred . . . ."

So speaking, he drew the young man across the church to where Lucinda was now standing. She was deeply agitated, and hardly took any notice of Otto. A brief slight bow — that was all; then she walked in silence with her husband to the carriage. When Doctor Lehrbach bid Wellner get in after her, she turned scarlet.

"What is it?" asked Lehrbach surprised.

"I have a rather bad headache," she said briefly, and sank again into silence.

"That is a pity!" said the lawyer.

Otto sat opposite them on the back seat. Lucinda's silk dress billowed and rustled round him — scorched him like a consuming fire. The shade of annoyance that clouded her face made her more lovely — more than ever worth winning.

"Poor dear child!" said Lehrbach presently, gently stroking his wife's forehead. "Yes, your head burns as if you had a fever. Put some Cologne-water on your temples; that did you so much good the other day.— Nonsense, my darling, I know what is good for you; be reasonable for once."

He rapped on the window and let down the glass: "Coachman," he said "drive home first." The coachman nodded and took the first turning.

When they had reached home Lehrbach opened the door and sprang out.

"You should never go out without your scent-bottle," he said to his wife. "Wait a moment, the servants have not got home yet; in two minutes I will be back again." He shut the door and ran into the house.

"Lucinda!" murmured Otto when the lawyer had disappeared.

"Not a word—hush, I entreat you!" groaned the young wife, hiding her face in her handkerchief. "I am too, too wretched!"

"I do not understand.— If you love me—as I love you—madly, wildly . . . ."

Lucinda looked sadly into his eyes. "You have a right to speak so," she said with quivering lips, "I can only submit to listen. But hear what, I must say! I could die of shame at having betrayed myself—it was frenzy—a sudden madness. You may despise me, you may hate me; but never dream or hope that I could bring myself to carry out such a crime."

Otto, desperate with his passion, tried to take her hand, but she snatched it away.

"What!" sighed Otto, "was it all a trick of my senses then? Was I to know such happiness for a moment, only to drag a weight of woe through the rest of my life? You cannot mean that Lucinda?"

"Yes, yes; indeed I do mean it."

"Very well. Then now listen to me, and my firm resolve. If you repulse me now — now, after having fanned the fires of my soul to an intolerable height, this very day, in the presence of all your father's guests I will stab myself at your feet. You may laugh, or you may weep,— but I swear by all that is sacred that I will keep my word!"

His voice was low, but so resolute that there was no possibility of doubting that he threatened in earnest. Lucinda covered her face with both hands.

"Oh, if you did but know . . ." she sighed miserably.

"What Lucinda? Speak; say one word to comfort me!"

"Not now . . . ."

"Then fix an hour when we may be alone. I must tell you how I have dared to love the wife of a man whom I honor with my whole soul, though I ought to hate him. I must, Lucinda,

for the idea that you can misunderstand me sends a dagger through my heart. And you, too — yes indeed, you owe me a reckoning. By Heaven! — It is not a noble impulse that makes a woman fill the man who loves her with hope at one moment, only to cast him into an abyss at the next. You must account for this revulsion, explain me this riddle which is wearing me to death."

Lucinda made no reply. Again he besought her, more tenderly and vehemently than before.

"Well," she said at last, "if you will swear by the Eternal God to listen to me quietly, like a true friend — and never, never to betray that I have been so weak as to grant you a — an assignation — I will tell you to-day how it happened — how it was ever possible.— For it is a burden on my soul too; I feel I must explain."

"By my sacred honor I swear it: never, never will I breathe the faintest syllable of anything that you wish kept secret."

"Hush," she whispered, putting her hand to her heart, "I heard the door — he is coming."

Doctor Lehrbach came back to the carriage door and opened it himself.

"You need not get down," he said to the footman. "Drive on, Karl," and he got in.

"There, my child," he said kindly. "I have

been gone rather long; the maid had mislaid the key. Now, give me your handkerchief — there, that is cool and comfortable I am sure."

"How kind you are," sighed his wife, and tears started to her eyes.

"You little goose!" said the lawyer. "But you really are quite unstrung. These church ceremonies — and the pastor really spoke very well.— Come, come, be calm; you are not apt to be so doleful. Herr Wellner, you must come to the rescue; tell us something funny about your Heinzius. But you are not quite yourself to-day either; you really must not take that stupid business too much to heart! I will make people see it in the true light; indeed I will talk to my father-in-law before we sit down to dinner."

The exigencies of the situation restored Lucinda's composure; she began to talk a little, at first with some effort, but presently with her usual ease.

Thus they reached the scene of the festivity. It was now growing dark, and the huge candelabra in the hall and on the stairs were already lighted; by the glare of light Otto could see the look of deep and acute suffering in Lucinda's face, in spite of the smile she wore.

"When and where?" he whispered, as they

went up the broad staircase, while the lawyer was detained by the Baroness von Sunthelm. Lucinda hesitated; then she was suddenly prompted to say: "After the polonaise, in the library."

It had cost her a moment of visible and agonizing effort to say so much. When Otto would have thanked her she stopped him.

"Not another word," she said very positively. "And remember, you have sworn. . . ."

"I have always asserted it when a spiteful world has said anything against him," drawled Frau von Sunthelm–Hiddensoe. "He has a good heart; he had tears in his eyes; and he is a member of the Magdalen charity we have just started." She shook her elaborate curls with pathetic emphasis.

"What! Tyllichau?" laughed Lehrbach. "Upon my word, Baroness, I shall be obliged at last to take off my hat to the success of your propaganda!"

The noise of a band drowned the lady's reply. They went into the large drawing-room where the newly-married member of the Magdalen-charity was standing with his myrtle-crowned bride in the midst of a perfect Witches' Sabbath of congratulating friends, aunts, and cousins; never failing in the stoical politeness of a courteous hero, and pre-

serving his presence of mind even when the Baroness Eleonora, waving a scented handkerchief, threw herself into his arms with sobs of ecstasy.

"My dear, noble young friend," she gasped out with a tear-choked utterance. "May the All-merciful God bless this happy day to you!"

Tyllichau pressed her lean fingers with tempered emotion, allowing her to rest her head on his shoulder for a second, and drop two tears into his waistcoat.

There was, indeed, a good deal of sighing and sobbing. Weddings and such family festivities allow of a display of certain emotions which, as a rule, are hidden at the bottom of our hearts. Even Anastasius, shed a surreptitious tear, though he neither cared for Tyllichau nor felt any special appeal to his sympathies. He was only thinking of the joys of youth, and following the young couple, in fancy, to the sunny Riva degli Schiavoni; he looked at the handsome bride, and saw how desperately she was in love — and he could not check a tear, worthy man, as he reflected on his own sixty-two years — he owned to fifty-seven — on all the annoyances of the last few weeks, on that detested "Wellner," and not less detested Peltzer.

Anna Föhrenstedt, again, the physician's wife:

Doctor Lehrbach was standing close to her when she suddenly put her handkerchief to her eyes, overcome by her feelings, while her bosom heaved with sobs. When she looked up again she gazed with an unutterably languishing expression at Otto, to whom Lehrbach happened to be speaking about the misunderstanding with Von Düren. It might be a mere coincidence, but in combination with the symptoms Lehrbach had noted on a previous occasion, it looked very suspicious. . . .

The orchestra, which was ingeniously concealed, now struck up the wedding-march from Lohengrin, and the company filed off in couples into the dining-room. The Baron and Baroness von Tyllichau-Sassnitz closed the procession, accompanied by Frau von Düren and Baroness Eleonora, who led them to the place of honor decked with flowers in the middle of one side of the table.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY in the morning of this fateful wedding-day Fanny had received by post the letter she had herself composed, with the tidings of woe that required her immediate departure. In the general

excitement this incident had soon been forgotten. The wily little person had her well-filled trunk deposited at a pastry-cook's in an out-of-the-way street; there she met Meynert, and then the pair — Fanny dressed in black and thickly veiled — were driven to an inn in the suburbs where they put up as if they had just arrived by train.

They were to leave Berlin by the express train at four in the morning. There was no other train after midnight; and before midnight Brönner could certainly not count on accomplishing his burglary on the safe in Von Düren's library. It happened very conveniently that a vessel was to sail next morning from the little seaport which Meynert had decided on starting from. After due consideration he had chosen the route by Copenhagen and England. It was the shortest line to the sea-coast, and the chances of an organized pursuit were less than on the more usual and direct main routes. Everything was in readiness; the funds of the socialist Propoganda were in Meynert's pocket; the passport, made out for Curt Reinhold and his wife Fanny Schmidt, gave an accurate description of the bearers; and Meynert's absence was satisfactorily accounted for, for at least a week.

Fanny, meanwhile, had perfected all the details

of her little game with Brönner. She had the key of the park-gate in her pocket and she would sneak in at about ten; Brönner could get into the house by the back door which was to be left open, and unlock the strong oak door of the library with a false key which had been in Fanny's possession for some days already. Here he would in all probability have ample leisure to make use of his steel jimmy centre-bit, and fine American saws, and by the end of an hour and a half or two hours would succeed in opening the safe which was not a particularly elaborate one. He was then to join Fanny in the garden and pack all that was most valuable into two leather bags that she was to have ready under her dress. This, as Fanny had not failed to point out to him, would attract far less attention than if Brönner himself were to be seen carrying a bundle or wallet.

Brönner reached the gate, punctual to a minute.

"Well?" he whispered timidly.

"Nothing could be better. You can set to work at once. If any one should happen to go into the room you have only to hide behind the curtain that hangs over the cabinet of curiosities."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Brönner. "You have explained that often enough.— But now

that it has got to be done I have the queerest feeling about my liver and lungs. If it comes to the worst . . ." he broke off and felt for his leathern belt through which he carried a hunting-knife six inches long.

"Get along!" said Fanny patting his face affectionately. "Do not be such a baby over the job. However, I will leave the door open; then, if anything goes wrong or takes you by surprise, you can bolt down the stairs and out into the garden, and be in safety before anyone knows exactly what has happened . . . of course, it would be too ridiculous if you took to your heels at the first creak in the floor. I have not taken all this trouble for that. You had better say at once that you have not the pluck for it. Then we will throw up the game, and you may stay where you are and find yourself walking off with the police at the next opportunity."

"So I should think!" replied Brönner. "Well, do you just keep quiet or it will be your fault if the police nab me. I must just look round me to see how I can manage."

He looked up at the long rows of windows at the back of the house. Most of these were dark; only the full moon was reflected from the glittering panes. The sound of music came faintly from

the rooms in the front. Brönner nodded to her and went forward on tip-toe; the door opened noiselessly, its hinges having been freshly oiled, admitting him into a dimly-lighted corridor, as still and empty as a passage in a convent; at the end of about twenty paces this corridor turned off to the left, ending in a staircase that led to the first floor. Brönner followed Fanny's instructions exactly, and found his way to the library. He paused to listen: all was quiet, and he stole in.

The strange aspect of the room gave him a shudder. It was perfectly dark excepting where, to the right of the door by which he had entered, the moon cast its light and the sharp outline of the window-panes aslant upon the floor. Part of this broad beam shone on the plinth of the iron cabinet; on each side of this cabinet, which stood between the windows, a double book-case of twice a man's height stood out in the middle of the magnificently large room, and across it, from the windows towards the door where he stood; the walls, too, were lined with book-shelves reaching almost to the ceiling. Here and there a marble figure or a plaster cast gleamed pale and ghostly in the darkness. Near the cabinet stood a lower set of shelves, hung with drapery that looked almost like a pall; on this stood various especially

precious rarities: a few fine fragments of statuary, an old Venetian glass, some stuffed animals, archaic vessels, engraved plates and jewelled weapons; the curtain, which shrouded them on the side towards the window, was ample enough to afford a hiding-place for any person of moderate dimensions.

All this, with the weird light and shadows from the moon, impressed Brönner's excited nerves most uncannily. He looked timidly about him, went across to the curtain, and then approached the iron safe, which, due regard being had to the moonlight, he thought he had better attack from the other side. He had just put his hand into his breast-pocket, where his tools were hidden, when a sudden noise turned his blood cold; he crouched as close as possible to the cabinet, standing in the shadow. He listened; there was no doubt about it: some one was coming slowly and softly towards him, between the two stands of book-shelves. Now he could make out the sheen of a white dress. He held his breath — it was a woman, coming nearer. Then, when she was not above six feet from the cabinet, she turned on her heel. At the same instant he heard other steps, a soft and cautious footfall, but recognizable at once as a man's.

Brönner breathed more freely: a pair of lovers, evidently, from among the company, who were taking advantage of the silence and darkness here for a stolen meeting. When they were once safely clasped in each other's arms they would have no thought nor leisure for an inspection of the nooks and corners.

It was, in fact Lucinda, who, with a beating heart, went forward to meet Otto.

"Good God, how can I dare to do this?" she murmured huskily. "Once more—swear."

"I swear by my honor," whispered Otto, intoxicated with passion, "that I will die rather than ever breathe a word of what you may tell me."

"Ah, more than that," said Lucinda: "that I have ever spoken to you at all—that we have ever met, in the dark, like criminals—that must be a solemn secret too."

"I swear it."

"Well then—listen to me. I will tell you truly and entirely all that can serve me as any sort of excuse for my disgrace. From the first hour I ever saw you I loved you—no, do not misunderstand me. I grant you nothing on the strength of this confession; it is only the due retribution for the horrible moment when I could so far forget my dignity and my duty!"

And she wrung her hand from his grasp, for he had seized it in a rapture of passion.

"Listen, only listen," she went on in a voice of pain. "I grew up in a home where, with every gift of position and fortune, I found nothing to satisfy the cravings of my soul. My father, whom I really worshipped, was the only gleam of light in my melancholy life; but his business occupied him so exclusively that he rarely could bestow on me more than a passing word or a kindly glance. That community of interests and ideas which is everything to a devoted child was out of the question. My sister did not understand me and my mother poured the full tide of her affection on Camilla. This partly, no doubt, was the reason that, even while I was still quite young, all that surrounded me had lost its charm; I held the world very cheap and regarded happiness or peace of mind as an illusion. I loathed everything — and above all the foolish, butterfly existence which is the delight of most young girls: the social trifling, the pleasures of fashionable life, the dazzling atmosphere of ball-rooms. I could not feel the smallest interest in any one of the young men who frequented the house — not enough to carry on a civil conversation; so I was silent, cold and gloomy. Then I perceived that

Doctor Lehrbach was paying me attentions of a very different stamp to those of our other sighing admirers.— I was not in love with him — no. Of that I never had any doubt. But I fancied I should never love; that it was not in my nature. So the inevitable result came about. He was misled by my friendly gratitude for his kindness, and proposed to marry me. My father, who just then was in a most critical position in consequence of some unfortunate circumstances, found in Doctor Lehrbach a good friend who held out a helping hand, so of course his answer was: 'If Lucinda does not say no I have nothing to say against it.'— And I did not say no. Indeed, my marriage was a release from the weight of solitude I had lived under. As his wife I had a sphere of duty, a round of tasks which enabled me to forget how little the world had to offer me. For a year and a half I was, if not happy, at any rate contented. I grew accustomed to smile—I might say accustomed to live.— As for what romancers call a heart, I honestly believed that mine was long since dead.— Then, an accident taught me that cold reason and prudence had misled me . . . You know it all now. The bitterest tears of repentance can never, never wash out the past, but if you are a man of honor you will keep it an

eternal secret. If it ever were known it would be my death — aye and his! I should break the heart of the noblest truest man that lives! . . . ."

"Lucinda," stammered Otto, all his self-possession swept away by the violence of contending feelings, "I could die of love, of shame.— How noble you are in your lofty self-contempt. But still, I cannot leave you — I cannot, I cannot . . ."

"You must. Good-bye. If you can do it without exciting suspicion avoid our house. Behave in all particulars so as to respect the honor and happiness of the best man on earth!"

"I implore you stay — a minute . . . ."

"Not another instant. I am gone. In ten minutes follow me — not sooner. Promise me!"

"As you will, Lucinda," Otto groaned in despair.

In frenzied rage against Fate he struck his forehead with his fists and clutched his hair. At last, worn out with the struggle, he sank into a chair in a hopeless attitude, his head resting in his hands.

Lucinda had vanished like a dream; she made her way slowly through the corridors and anterooms, and reached the drawing-room just as the first quadrille was beginning. Her absence had not been remarked.

Hardly was she seated in one of the easy-chairs that were placed round the room, when Baroness von Sunthelm came up to her and whispered, with a disagreeable smile:

"Camilla has left us early to change her dress for her journey. She is rather in a hurry, if I may be allowed to say so."

Lucinda rose. She longed to take leave of Camilla alone, before the bridal pair were again surrounded by a crowd of friends and relatives. She went to her sister's boudoir; the maid had just fastened the bride's travelling-dress. The two young women kissed each other. Never had Camilla seen her proud grave sister so deeply moved as at this moment.

Then Frau Lehrbach retired, tremulous with agitation, and Frau von Tyllichau-Sassnitz finished her elegant toilet. With a travelling-bag slung over her shoulder and a coquettish hat on her thick fair hair, she left the scene of her maiden existence, and went into the sitting-room where her parents, and certain aunts who believed their presence to be indispensable at every phase of this great occasion, were waiting for her. The young husband too was ready, leaning impatiently against the window frame with his fur-lined coat over his arm.

Herr von Düren kissed his daughter's forehead with paternal solemnity; it seemed as though he wished to give double emphasis to his own dignity and composure, in the presence of the chattering and sobbing women. His wife, on the contrary, was excitedly effusive. She clasped her daughter convulsively to her heart and Camilla returned the embrace with unwonted warmth and vehemence.

"Oh dear!" cried Camilla, suddenly. A handsome bracelet set with brilliants was broken in the energy of her embrace, and fell ringing on the ground. Herr von Tyllichau hastened to pick it up.

"I only hope," sighed Camilla, "that it is no evil omen!"

"Broken fetters!" said Eric smiling. "The chains of childhood are cast off, and Hymen opens the door of perfect liberty to the blooming and blushing bride."

"Oh, in that way you may explain away anything. It is too provoking — a bracelet, and just as I am leaving . . . . Besides, what can I do; I cannot go away so unfinished! . . . . And the others are all packed up."

"Make yourself easy," said her father. "I will give you a talisman which cannot fail to over-

ride the evil omen you are afraid of — a bracelet that belonged to my dear mother. I have often meant to give it to you, and this is the moment of all others. Wait, and in five minutes I will bring it you here."

He took a candle from the chimney-shelf and, screening the flame with his hand, he hurried off to the library.

Otto Wellner meanwhile had risen from his seat, and hearing steps he hid behind one of the book-cases . . . .

Herr von Düren, with a pleased smile, and taking the key out of his pocket as he went, walked straight up to the iron safe where the family valuables were kept. Brönner had squeezed closer and closer to the wall, pulling the window curtain over his legs as far as he could — but the light came nearer and nearer.

In the next instant Herr von Düren stood rooted with surprise. He shouted for help and dropped the candle. In the shadow of the cabinet he had detected the figure of a man, a stranger, whose efforts to conceal himself left no doubt as to the criminality of his purpose.

The master of the house, who did not lack courage, instinctively stepped forward. He put out his hand and clutched a tuft of curly hair; but

at the same moment he gave a fearful and piercing cry, and then his breath rattled in his throat. A knife had been driven deep into his breast. He fell before Otto, forgetful of his own position, could rush to his side.

Brönner meanwhile had fled through a side door, which he had presence of mind enough to lock behind him; he put the key in his pocket without clearly knowing why, and then, urged by terror, he flew down into the garden.

"It is all up!" he gasped out as he ran past Fanny. "Come, fly — I will tell you all when we are safe."

Fanny trembled a little, but she was calm enough to warn the fugitive to make no noise; they stole out by the garden gate, which Fanny locked, and walked quite deliberately, in spite of Brönner's fever of panic, till they were safely away in a side street.

Von Düren's cry had rung through the house. A servant on the stairs had taken the alarm and had shouted loudly for his fellow-servants. In a few minutes the whole house was roused, and ten or twelve persons hurried to the spot before the servants could come up; among them Kurt Ewald, Tyllichau, and Baron Anastasius, with lights and weapons snatched up in haste.

Herr von Düren was gasping for life in a pool of blood; the knife still up to the hilt in his breast. By his side, pale and agitated, stood Otto Wellner. His towzled hair was enough to give him the look of a man who has gone through a desperate struggle.

"How horrible!" cried Tyllichau, his lips quivering. "What has happened?"

Otto, utterly dazed and confused, briefly related the facts. The first word, the first interjection, told him that not one of the bystanders believed his statement. Anastasius von Sunthelm, especially, put on a very ominous expression, though his eyes sparkled with wild satisfaction. He went to the side door and tried to open it.

"Locked!" he exclaimed sharply. "And no sign of the key. A singular coincidence, certainly! Perhaps I may be allowed to enquire what Herr Otto Wellner was doing in this library at such an extraordinary hour?"

"I. . . ." stammered Otto.

He saw the net closing round his head. For a moment he hesitated; then he said coldly: "That is my affair."

"A singular coincidence I must say," repeated Sunthelm. "All the more so from its taking place within a few hours of that demonstration by the

mob — within a few hours of my poor friend's having defied this socialist Wellner's insolence with open contempt, till he was forced to blush with shame and rage. . . ."

"It is a lie!" cried Otto frantically. "I am not a socialist; on the contrary. . . ."

But Baron Anastasius was not to be put off.

"And it seems to me remarkable, to say the least," he went on with unmoved persistency, "that this Wellner should happen to be wandering so mysteriously in the library of the very man who, an hour since, announced his righteous purpose of purging his establishment of every socialist element — officials and workmen — with direct reference to the row in front of the church this morning. This step, it would seem, would have been as awkward for Herr Wellner as for the lowest porter on the premises."

"I knew nothing of it," said Otto. "And if I had known I should not have cared. Only the foulest calumny can dare. . . ."

"Gentlemen," the baron went on, addressing the now numerous assembly, some of whom were attending to Von Düren while some stood staring in blank horror at Otto: "It is my very decided opinion that the law would wish to take every precaution for the safe-keeping of so important a

witness as Herr Wellner. We owe it, indeed, to the cause of truth and justice, to take vigorous steps to prevent Herr Wellner's being called away on a sudden journey. A few of the police would not be out of place here. . . ."

"They are coming, they are here," cried a servant at the door. "The commissary of the district will be here in five minutes to take note of the circumstances and details."

Otto was trembling from head to foot.

"You miserable scoundrel!" he said to his accuser. "Will you try to make him believe that I — I. . . ." But his voice failed him; he could only clench his fist with rage.

"I do not want to make any one believe anything; merely to state facts," replied the baron retiring behind a policeman.

"Come with us," said one of the constables, going up to Otto.

"Wait one moment," cried Anastasius von Sunthelm, to whom Kurt Ewald had just spoken a few excited words. "This lock of hair was in the hand of the murdered man. We may as well see whether the criminal cannot be identified on the spot."

The baron had made up his mind that the lock of hair was identical in color with Otto's, and

what had at first been merely a malignant accusation was fast becoming a serious conviction. He went up to Otto, and one of the policemen held a candle. The color did not match exactly with the hair on the front and top of his head, but it did at the back. A few scattered hairs were found moreover on Otto's coat, and his head, as we have seen, was in a state of disorder which suggested the clutch of an adversary's hand. Otto Wellner submitted in silence; as Anastasius held the little lock of hair close to his tossed curls, he touched the young man's neck. Otto shuddered.

Yes, now he knew the world again! After that brief rapture of passion that it had held before him, it had put on the hideous Gorgon's face once more that it had always worn, with a grin of treachery, falsehood, cruelty, baseness! — He almost fancied, as Sunthelm's cold knuckles touched his skin, that he felt the steel of the executioner.

The curse, the misery! — "What was he doing in the library in the dark?" — This was the rope that would hang him. He had only to speak the word and this first and most disastrous enigma would be solved; but that word he might not and would never utter.

He looked up like a hunted creature driven to

its lair by the hungry pack. Was there no way out of this horrible complication?

Von Düren, meanwhile, had been carried to his room, and put to bed with the greatest care. Doctor Föhrenstedt, having examined his wound, gave the inconsolable family very little hope. Lucinda, utterly upset by the excitement of the last few weeks, by her interview with Otto, and by this horrible catastrophe, had fallen into a dead faint on hearing this verdict.

The party had, of course, broken up. Only a few relatives remained, discussing in anxious suspense, the confused reports which were repeated by one to another; the rest of the company retired without ceremony.

Doctor Lehrbach, with a face as pale as death, knelt speechless by the couch where Lucinda was lying, as colorless and motionless as a corpse. A young physician — one of the guests — was doing his utmost to revive her. At length she opened her eyes, but her wandering gaze showed that worse was yet to come. She shivered violently and her teeth chattered with cold; her mind was astray.

At this instant a voice said behind Lehrbach: "They are taking away the assassin."

Stout as he was he sprang impetuously to his

feet. His eye fell on the physician's wife, sunk in an arm-chair and sobbing wildly; as Lehrbach passed her she gasped out in a convulsion of woe: "Oh God! — He! — he!"

The lawyer hesitated; then he noiselessly hurried out.

He met the party on the stairs.

"Stop," he said. "I must say a word to him. Justice will not be impeded by that!"

Otto looked up, startled and moved.

"Unhappy man!" whispered Lehrbach drawing his young favorite aside. "Tell me, confess to me—before God, what you say shall be buried in the grave! Look in my face, Otto. Are you guilty?"

"No," said Otto.

"I believe you," replied Lehrbach, shaking hands with him in the face of the staring bystanders.

Then he hurried back to his suffering wife.

CHAPTER VI.

BRÖNNER and Fanny soon parted; it was hardly advisable that they should be seen together after the events of the evening. Brönner had

merely said: "something had happened;" and as his attempt had been fruitless the further arrangements they had planned, of course fell through. They could, each separately, provide for their own safety; so far as she was concerned she had only to take care that the truth as to her uncle's sudden death should never come out.

Brönner,— hunted by Furies, and yet walking with the affected deliberation of a man anxious not to betray that he feels the law at his heels — made his way back to the old clothes-shop in the Fabriciusstrasse; muttering a few words to the host as he passed, he crept up to his dismal garret. Instead of the drive he had dreamed of with bewitching Fanny, gold and jewels in his bag and the clear wintry sky overhead, this desolate den and aggravated fears of the pursuit of the police— the contrast was crushing! This cursed, squalid hole, where he could only stand upright at one end; and so draughty and cold; the cracked window afforded but scant shelter; the smoky lamp he had lighted flared and flickered on the top of the stone water-pitcher like a Will-o'-the-wisp, and cast a dancing and distorted shadow of the wretch on the crumbling plaster walls.

Brönner quaked in every limb, and started at the sound of his own footsteps; every instant he

fancied he heard voices. He hung his clothes over the chair and crept, with chattering teeth, under the bedclothes. When he shut his eyes he saw the library in the partial moonlight and the unsuspecting figure of his victim coming towards him, nearer and nearer — till crazed with fear he drew out the knife. . . .

Suddenly, a horrid thought struck a chill to his heart — in his terror he had till now forgotten it: He had left the knife! He knew enough of the processes of a criminal enquiry to be aware that such a piece of evidence is of more value in tracing the murderer than half a dozen collateral indications. It was true that though this knife had been in his possession for years, he had never shown it to any one; and Schulze, the owner of the house, in whose keeping it had been for a month past, would hardly betray him. Still, who could tell but that the devil might meddle in the matter? It was a blunder — "better would have been better," as a German saying goes.

Then, for the hundredth time, he wondered whether the stab had been, as it looked . . . and he trembled till every joint of the bedstead creaked. If the man were to die of his wound! If he were in fact murdered!

"Well and if he does! — I could not help it.

He would have had me fast in another minute. I had to do it, I was forced to do it. Every one must look out for himself."

So he argued; but his terror and despair were not to be talked down. He heard the man's piercing cry, it rang in his ears, it penetrated to his back-bone. Then in fancy he saw the police running from all quarters to surround the old-clothes shop, coming up-stairs . . . they had discovered his loft. They broke open the door—they dragged the murderer out from his abject bed. . .

Brönner hid his face in the musty pillow and only by slow degrees dared to look up again.

There — what was that?

The moonlight threw a queer, distorted shadow on the foot of the bed, from the frosted window-pane. As Brönner turned he saw the outline of a face. He knew those ghastly features; they were those of the man he had stabbed.

He closed his eyes with a groan; he could not sleep in spite of his physical and mental exhaustion. It was a miserable state of things, and he clenched his fist and cursed his wasted existence—the first love of play that had thrown him into the company of the refuse of city-life; the theft that had cost him eighteen months liberty; Peltzer's tempting hints, and Fanny's smiling collusion. He

forgot that he himself had supplied fuel and flame, and thought of himself only as a victim, not as a criminal. He looked back on a happy time when he was free and guiltless, an industrious and honest workman at the great locksmith's in the Cornmarket. He had every hope and prospect of advancement till that cursed fellow had tempted him to gamble and idle. — And now?

He pitied himself deeply. Suddenly he burst out crying like a child that had been ill-used by its parents.

How strange are the alternations of human feeling. Brönner, the assassin, within three hours of murdering a man, had cried himself to sleep.

While her accomplice was going through a mental process which, if it was not remorse, was to some extent its counterfeit, Fanny's indomitable audacity was far from any weak revulsion of feeling. She had considered the changed aspect of affairs; it was annoying, certainly. She would have given much to be able to join her lover with the delightful surprise of an unexpected contribution to their store; but as the attempt had failed, of what use was it to sulk and be downcast? The robbery could not be tried a second time; for burnt children dread the fire, and the Von Dürens would take every precaution for the future. But

Leopold Meynert was ready and had all safe. How much, she did not know, but that it was more than enough for mere travelling-expenses she felt sure; and if it came to the worst, her chances for the future would be just as good on the other side of the Atlantic as here "in dull old Europe." Over there, in the Land of Liberty she and her lover could be happy together without troubling their heads about the whimpering of a bothering wife, who was beginning to see too clearly through her husband's infidelities. So cheer up! Bury this failure with the deeds of the past—and make the best of what was left! Meynert had known nothing of the scheme that had come to nothing, so she could hide it all the more easily in the recesses of her love-sick brain.

Fanny went off without delay to the hotel. With the confident air of a fine lady she walked past the porter's office, enquiring coolly whether "her husband" had come in. The man asked for her number, glanced at his board, and said "Yes."

So Fanny mounted the stairs, holding her head very high, and knocked at the door of number sixteen. With a sigh of tender satisfaction she laid her head on her lover's shoulder.

"I was able to come sooner than I expected," she said coaxingly.

"It is uncommonly lucky too," said Meynert. "I was quite uneasy. It was a queer fancy of yours to manage this business at night."

"I had no choice. My cousin did not come home till ten. Do not scold me now, do you hear? I will tell you all about it some day. You may suppose I had to lay my plans cleverly to make sure of not being missed for three or four days."

Meynert clasped her in his arms and kissed her rosy lips.

"I would give a great deal," he whispered, "to be safe on board at this minute. I cannot get rid of the feeling that something will come between us at the last minute."

"What nonsense! What can come between us? You have only to go on as if you did not care a straw, and look in the face of the world as gaily and coolly—as I do, for instance. Since you shaved, and combed your hair over your forehead, you are another man; and then the eyeglasses! I bet anything that your best friend would not know you, and who on earth are we likely to meet at the station at four in the morning?"

"You are right," said Meynert. "There, it is striking a quarter to eleven. I told the waiter

that the carriage must be at the door at three precisely. Till then we shall have time to talk over everything—even how we must behave on board ship so as not to get ourselves into a scrape. You are so fond of talking, and, sharp as you are, some things might come to light which would astonish our fellow-passengers. If there is the slightest suspicion we are far from safe on board—not even on an English ship, for quite lately . . . ."

"But, my dear fellow," interrupted Fanny: "We have settled all that a dozen times already. However—as you please—it will make the time go faster perhaps; for, to tell you the truth, I feel so sick with all the hurry and bother that I have not the heart to spend it in kissing you, though that would be better than empty chatter."

Meynert ordered some cold food and a bottle of Burgundy. After they had demolished the wings of a fowl without much relish, and emptied the bottle, they sat close to each other, whispering and once more rehearsing their parts. Meynert kept his eye on the slowly ticking clock. Time, which at their former rapturous meetings had seemed all too swift, crawled to-night like a limping cripple, and Fanny's sleepy eyes blinked wearily. When once they should be seated in the train?

At last! They heard the heavy slow tread of horses below. The stable boy was putting in the horses to the hotel omnibus. He was punctual; it was still thirteen minutes to three. Meynert sprang up and seized his bag.

"Be quiet," said Fanny. "You are displaying too great haste. Now, if I were a policeman I should at once insist on seeing your papers."

"Do not cast the devil's shadow on the wall!" muttered Meynert. "But you are quite right."

With affected indifference he allowed the loutish house boy to fetch his trunks, and carry them leisurely down to the door.

In ten minutes more they were off; the omnibus clattering and jolting through the silent streets. A little snow had fallen and the pavement was so slippery that the horses progressed but slowly.

The shortest way was past the police station. Meynert cast an uneasy glance up at the moonlit gables of the old buildings which contained not only the principal office and station in the city but also courts for the first examination of criminals, and, away to the left, a long row of cells for their detention.

Just as he was reflecting how the smallest mishap, the most trifling delay, might lead to his

eclipse behind those barred windows, and what a cruel fate it would be that should snatch him from his Fanny's side and cast him into a prison cell—the omnibus stood still: one of the horses was down.

The driver sprang from his seat with a sounding oath. Meynert did not swear, but his rage at this unlucky incident was certainly deeper than the coachman's. He trembled so that Fanny looked round at him in alarm: a policeman was coming out of the station, obviously with no other purpose than that of helping the man to get his beast up.

"It is no wonder," said the driver, "it is awfully slippery. It is as much as a man can do to keep his legs. If you will hold the reins I will unbuckle the traces."

When he had released the horse from the harness he took his whip and cracked it violently again and again, shouting and yelling, while the policeman tugged at the horse's head. All in vain. The brute was old and stiff, and in spite of its utmost struggles and good will it fell again and again like lead, into its first position. The driver, panting for breath, paused in his fruitless efforts; then he threw open the door of the omnibus.

"If the gentleman would not mind lending a hand. . . ." he said touching his hat.

Meynert seemed paralyzed. But Fanny said with hasty decision:

"To be sure — or we shall be too late for the train. Jump out, Kurt."

There was nothing for it. If he objected, it was more than probable that they would miss the train and the boat. Besides, his refusal might excite suspicions. So he got out and, in deadly terror, prepared to aid the man. He heaved and pushed with all his might; but even thus they could not get the horse up.

"There is mischief in the air to-night," observed the policeman, wiping his face. "It is a night of ill-luck in everything, great and small. This is the seventh adventure I have had since eleven o'clock. First a murderer to take in charge — a rascal who had stabbed Herr Commissionsrath von Düren out of pure rage over socialism; then a woman to fish out of the river down there — dead, of course; the Humane Society's medals only grow for loafers who happen to stretch out a hand to a fellow who gets the cramps when he is swimming;—well, and thirdly I was near getting my skull cracked between two drunken men fighting with iron rails; fourthly, a man run over, Drosky No. 190; fifthly, a girl with a broken ankle, it was so confoundedly slippery; sixthly—

well, well, God knows it is no pleasure to wear a policeman's helmet!—Now then, once more; and if we cannot get the brute up this time I will whistle for some of the other men."

This catalogue of disasters, which the man rattled off in a snarling injured tone, impressed both Meynert and Fanny most uncomfortably.

Brönner was a prisoner! — This was Fanny's first thought. He had stabbed her master and she — she was partly responsible for the crime. If he had mentioned her name, if he had blabbed, the telegraph would probably have done its work before she could even get into the train with Meynert.

What then? But the answer was ready. In her, levity of the most frivolous type was supplemented by a keen power of foresight. Ever since she had laid this plot with Peltzer she had always carried poison in her pocket; a tiny phial of prussic acid. Years ago she had begged this phial — why she hardly knew — of one of her admirers who was employed in chemistry: "In case he should prove faithless," she had told him with a laugh. So in the worst emergency she had a feeling of security, founded in the conviction of having the means of escape; those hideous walls, black against the sky, could never hold her. Be-

fore the law could lay hands on her the farce would be played out! Still, her pleasure-loving nature revolted at the idea, and she shrank into the darkest corner of the carriage and made no sound.

The idea of a reinforcement summoned from the station spurred Meynert to almost superhuman efforts. He strained every sinew to the rigidity of iron — and lo! the task was accomplished.

Breathless and gasping, he got into the omnibus again; the trembling beast was hastily harnessed, and they reached the railway station without further misadventure. They were only just in time to take their tickets and register their luggage; with the receipt in his hand Meynert leaped into the *coupé* where Fanny was anxiously awaiting him, and in an instant the train was in motion.

The policeman had gazed after the omnibus as it rumbled off with a look of vexation; then he turned away, down his beat, towards the northern side of the city. His way led him past a supper-house which was still full of noisy drinkers in spite of the lateness of the hour. It was the tavern where Otto Wellner and Pröhle had sat talking that evening after Meynert's address, and where Pröhle

had burst into such fury over his Adele's suspicious vagaries. Accident, or the wish to get into the most out-of-the-way den he could find, had brought the type-founder to-night again, to this resort of the billiard-playing counter-jumpers of the quarter. His unexpected dismissal had cast him into such depths of misanthropic despair that it was a comfort to him to revive the memories of that evening with Otto. He felt familiar with these two rooms, and with the painted barmaid; that table over which he had poured out his full heart to his friend was, he thought, a fitting place where he might drown his present sulky woes.

And the usually sober and prudent man drank deep. The beer was not tempting, but it was all the same to him so long as it deadened his misery and dulled his brain. He had sat there three, four hours, his head resting on his hands, staring into vacancy, and uttering smothered groans and curses which increased in vigor and frequency as the liquor stirred his blood.

In the outer room the lads were playing billiards as usual; among them again that "Herr Arthur" whom Otto had recognized as his acquaintance of the "Golden Anchor," and the red-handed herring-salesman who had expressed himself so strongly with regard to his master.

The last game was ended; Elvira's painted cheeks showed traces of endearments; although it was so late the company was still alert. After a few more or less racy anecdotes they began to discuss the event of the day: the great socialist demonstration at the door of the church of St. Hedwig. The herring-seller and a pale, very young man represented the democratic party; the rest regarded it as a mere craze, abused the whole "dirty crew," and with one accord agreed that this Wellner, who had been at the bottom of it all, must be a hot-headed scapegrace.

Pröhle's eyes glittered as he overheard them. The youngsters who were raving in there were not above four or five, but if they had been a score he would not have stopped to consider. His business was to take the part of the man who had stood by him so kindly, who had given him comfort on the very spot where the name of Wellner was now being held up to obloquy.

He rose, and planting himself in the doorway he roared out at the astonished party:

"What scoundrel here dares to abuse my friend, Otto Wellner? Who dares to fling mud at him? Let him stand forth — a miserable snarling cur — and repeat it to my face!"

The shopmen looked at each other in inde-

cision. This man, with his bony, homely face was certainly a formidable antagonist; still, their numbers outweighed his superior strength, and it would be sheer sneaking to refuse to give a fitting answer to this challenge—before Elvira too!

"Is not this the very man who was here a little while ago with that fellow Wellner, and made such a row?" cried the lad known as Arthur. "We did not know then what a nice sort of man Wellner was or he would soon have seen the outside of the door. You brazen-faced bully, what is it you want? Do you suppose that we will let ourselves be over-crowed like a parcel of school-boys?"

"Arthur!" said the *Kellnerin* imploringly, "if the master hears you . . . ."

"Who cares if he does?" cried a second, encouraged by Arthur's boldness. "The master should keep better order, and forbid such fellows as that to come inside his doors!"

Fritz Pröhle, purple with rage, had stepped close up to this truculent youth.

"You rascal, you!" he exclaimed dropping his heavy hand on the startled lad's shoulder so that his slim figure nearly doubled up. "Take back your words — will you?"

"Come on!" cried Arthur, raising his glass.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Do you want to see him break our heads one after another? — There, take that!" And, as he spoke, he flung the heavy beer-glass, with all his force, at the back of Pröhle's head. Pröhle turned upon him like lightning, and in one second Arthur lay under the billiard-table, bleeding from the mouth and nose. All the rest, prompted partly by fear and partly by rage, fell upon Pröhle. It was like hell broken loose; a second and a third sank groaning under the champion's herculean fist.

At this moment the policeman appeared on the scene; no explanation was required.

"You all come along with me to the lock-up," he said roughly. "Yes, you too, my lady. Do not try to come over me with talk! We shall soon find out who is to blame. On you go!"

And the little procession set out, along the dark streets, past the place where the omnibus-horse had lain in the snow, and into the dismal precincts of the police station.

The combatants were identified. Arthur having fainted away after his examination from loss of blood, the commissary on duty thought it necessary to detain Pröhle for the present. The rest, including the weeping Elvira were dismissed with a caution.

Thus it came to pass that Pröhle, ere long, had fallen into a drunken sleep on the hard camp-bed of a police-cell, only divided by two walls from Otto Wellner, who sat in blank absorption, watching the moonbeams slowly circle behind the window-bars of his cell. Even in his dreams Pröhle still twitched and struggled as though he were boxing the ears of whole armies of perverse youngsters. He had played the part of a lamb so long for Adele's sake! And now that the bear had revived in him his heart beat more freely; he felt freer, even in his prison, and breathed deeply and easily like a merchant who hears that a long-looked-for vessel had come to port.

CHAPTER VII.

MORNING broke gloomy and late. Leaden clouds covered the sky and large snow-flakes fell slowly on the white shroud which lay, some inches thick already, on the squares and highways. In spite of the ugly weather Heinrich Salomon was on his way to the Sandgasse before it struck eight. As he was one of the few persons who knew the schoolmaster personally, he thought it

only an act of common humanity to give Heinzius the earliest information as to what had happened to Wellner.

Salomon himself had been utterly astounded by the course of events. He suspended judgment for the present; in the practical logic of psychology the processes of his mind were apt to be dilatory and dull.

When he knocked at the door the schoolmaster was in the very act of buttoning himself into his old-fashioned great-coat. Otto's non-appearance had at first puzzled, and at last alarmed him. Now, at near nine o'clock, his lively imagination had painted the most terrible possibilities. His purpose was to go first to the Von Dürens' house and ascertain when and with whom Otto had quitted it.

"Sit down," said Salomon. "Your enquiries are unnecessary. The most disastrous circumstances . . . ."

"I thought as much!" said Heinzius turning pale. He tossed his coat on to the bed, and seated himself by Salomon on the sofa, with his shoulders up to his ears as if he were freezing.

"Be calm," Salomon went on. "He is alive; he is perfectly well and unhurt. But things have happened . . . ."

There was a tap at the door. Emma Lersner, who had been busied in the corridor with some household task, had overheard the schoolmaster's exclamation and Salomon's reply, and, terribly anxious, she now came in. At the sight of her colorless face Heinzius sprang up, expecting to receive her fainting form; but she only clutched the back of a chair. Then she said in a dull husky voice:

"May I hear what you are talking about?"

"Indeed I am sorry to say it is no secret," replied Salomon; and he proceeded to tell what he knew, interrupting his narrative to make incidental reflections which tortured Emma's impatience beyond endurance.

When, at length he brought out the fatal fact Emma tottered; her knees trembled; the light grew black before her eyes. But she recovered herself by a strong effort of will. When the professor ceased she said calmly:

"It certainly looks like a crime — but it is only a misunderstanding. The truth must come out on enquiry."

"Of course!" said the schoolmaster.

"I cannot pretend to foresee the end," said the professor. "As matters stand Wellner's position is a very awkward one."

"But you speak as if you thought it possible . . ." cried Emma quivering.

"My dear young lady," said Salomon, "we can never pronounce *à priori* that anything is impossible, unless the assumption of its possibility would involve us in a logical fallacy. Indeed, I am quite in earnest. You argue from an *à priori* conclusion; you are breaking one of the first laws of induction."

"I do not know what you mean. But one thing I do know, whether it is logical or not: Herr Wellner is innocent. That frank nature — so thoroughly kind and feeling — you, Herr Heinzius . . . . It is madness, sheer madness!"

"Otto? My Otto?" cried Heinzius wiping his eyes with his hand: "Herr Professor, you do not know him. You have no notion of the man's character if you are not convinced beforehand . . ."

"So much the better. I, as I say, cannot pledge myself to any apodictic assertion. At the same time, I am ready and glad to give you my best assistance in any efforts on behalf of the unhappy young man. The choice of a competent counsel seems to me of the first importance. If Herr von Düren were not unfortunately the victim, of course Doctor Lehrbach would be our man. As it is he, *eo ipso*, is not to be thought of . . . ."

"Do you think not?" said Heinzius absently.

"Do I think not? Why it is simply out of the question that the son-in-law should defend his own father-in-law's . . . assailant."

"Why?" cried Emma impetuously, almost angrily. "Why should Doctor Lehrbach belie his friendship for Otto because, by chance . . . ? It is only a case of unfounded suspicion."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Salomon shrugging his shoulders.

"On the contrary," she went on, "he ought to be more ready to defend Otto; that of itself would produce an impression in his favor. That would serve to convince those who do not know Otto, of his complete innocence."

"Possibly," said the professor. "But as matters now stand. . . ."

"I think better of Doctor Lehrbach! It is true, I have hardly seen him; but it is enough to have looked once into his kind, honest face to feel certain that he follows the dictates of his heart — that he is superior to the prejudices of his neighbors."

"In point of fact," began the schoolmaster.

"I will go to him," said Emma. "Now, this minute." Then, turning to Salomon she added: "Can you stay here a little while? I will take a

hackney-carriage and I shall be back again in an hour and a half, at most."

"Your energy is splendid!" said the professor with tragic emphasis. "Very good. Do what you can. I will wait here."

"Shall I go with you?"

"No, thank you; we must not leave the Herr Professor alone. I shall soon return."

She went to her own room which she now shared with Martha Voss. Emma herself had proposed this to the forlorn girl, partly out of compassion and to give her a home once more in the centre of a family circle; partly because, as a thrifty housewife, she was anxious to recover to some extent the losses of the last few weeks. Martha had gone to work at eight; Adele too had left the house. In answer to her mother's astonished questions Emma referred her to Herr Heinzius who could explain everything. She hastily put on her best dress and her warm Sunday jacket, and hurried away.

The weather was worse than ever; a violent wind blew icy clouds of sleet in her face. But what did she care, in her tremulous anxiety, for cold and storm. She ran through the deep crunching snow as if she were flying over flowery meadows. At the next hackney-coach stand

there was no drosky to be seen — nor at the next after that. She must go on foot. The keen northeast blast whistled about her ears; she could hardly keep her eyes open; but yet this struggle with the storm, in spite of her agony of anxiety, sent a glow of rapture to her heart. She felt as though she — thrashed by the wind and icy shower — were offering her first sacrifice for the sake of the man whom her simple, innocent heart worshipped with unlimited devotion, whom she would have saved at any cost, even at that of her life.

At last, quite breathless, she reached the goal of her exhausting walk.

"Doctor Lehrbach can see no one," said the servant.

"But it is of vital importance."

"Very sorry," said the man. "My orders are strict. On account of my mistress. . . ."

"Yes. But there must be some exceptions! You must not — cannot send me away. — If only you knew. . . ."

"Very sorry."

Emma stood helpless. Till this hour she had never had any intercourse with wealthy houses, and had no idea how to deal with servants. A sudden impulse made her feel for her purse; she took out

a gold coin and held it out to the man with pathetic hesitancy.

"You are very kind — but I really must not. . . ." said the servant pushing back her hand.

Emma burst into tears.

"But I must see him, oh! I must. — Will you go and tell him, at least, that I have come from Otto Wellner? . . ."

"What? From him?"

Emma shuddered, for the tone in which the words were said betrayed, even more surely than Salomon's arguments, that the conviction of Otto's guilt was widely spread. The poor girl's hopes that Doctor Lehrbach would stand by his former protégé sank to the lowest ebb. Still, still, she must try again.

"Yes, from him," she repeated looking up. "If you know Herr Wellner you know that he is a friend of your master's—that he is placed, quite innocently, in a most painful position, from which Doctor Lehrbach can release him. Now say that I am here — Emma Lersner is my name—go and tell him, or all the responsibility will rest on you."

The man was evidently shaken. The young woman impressed him favorably. She was so

earnest in the matter; her bright eyes were full of tears. — Could he? — At this moment a door was opened at the further side of the hall and Doctor Lehrbach stood in the opening.

"Baumann," he said sharply, "I particularly begged you. . . ."

Emma glided past the servant.

"Thank God!" she said with a sigh of relief. "He wanted to send me away, but some good angel made you come out! Do not be angry with me. I have come on his account. I know how fearfully this dreadful business has fallen on you too. But surely, surely, you will not on that account leave an innocent man without help or comfort?"

"Oh, it is you?" said the lawyer. "I did not know you at first. Pray speak low. Here, come in here — the little room to the left. — It is all right, Baumann."

"Now," said Lehrbach, when they were alone. "Only be brief, my child. What has happened? Have you any facts, any evidence that may clear the matter up?"

"No, nothing. Nothing, dear good Herr Doctor!" said Emma, again beginning to cry. "I only wanted to beg and pray you not to give Herr Wellner up, not to leave him to his fate. At

first I said to myself that it could only be some stupid mistake, that it would be cleared up as soon as Otto opened his lips. But as I came along I thought it all over, and what Doctor Salomon had said. It all came over me like a bad dream, and I could not help remembering that many an innocent man may have been condemned by the judge only because appearances were against him, because no one would take the trouble to prove the truth. . . ."

She broke off. The lawyer watched her blushing face which looked up at his with an eager smile of hope, and his heart was touched. The girl had not the faintest suspicion that she had betrayed the most sacred secret of her heart.

"True," he said after a pause. "And you are quite sure that he is innocent?"

"Oh!" said Emma with a reproachful glance.

Lehrbach held out his hand.

"Make yourself easy, my child," he said with much feeling. "Your friend, who is my friend too, shall not lack such help as sincere zeal may afford him. I have had ample experience, thank God, in solving such mysteries! I will conduct the enquiry myself, and — if I fail to discover the truth beforehand — I will defend him myself at the trial."

"I knew it, I was sure," cried Emma covering the lawyer's hand with kisses.

Doctor Lehrbach was, in fact, famous among the lawyers of the capital for a particular skill in demolishing delusive evidence, and as a masterly advocate who, when once he was persuaded of his client's innocence, worked with head and heart to secure the triumph of justice.

A series of splendid successes had crowned his efforts. Not unfrequently his acumen had enabled him to prove the defendant's innocence, not merely by negative evidence but by positive induction which ultimately led to the conviction of the real criminal. In other very complicated cases, where the facts were indisputable, Lehrbach's keen psychological insight had thrown light on circumstances and motives which had greatly mitigated the intrinsic guilt of his client.

His triumphs were known to all, even to Emma. When Doctor Lehrbach acceded to her request a feeling of safety, of happy confidence, filled her soul. Once more she kissed the soft, round hand that was so becomingly graced by the large seal-ring and the white shirt-cuff. She left the house quite radiant.

She hastened home in triumph through the storm and snow. Only one thing disappointed

her a little. Doctor Lehrbach had seemed quite prepared to defend Otto; she would rather that he should have hesitated a little, and that she should have had the pleasure of winning him over to the rescue. She was so jealous in her devotion that she wanted Otto to owe everything to her and to her only.

When she had quitted him Doctor Lehrbach returned with a sigh to his wife's room; knitting his brows anxiously, he seated himself in an arm-chair at the foot of the bed. The doctor had left the house about twenty minutes since. She was in a high fever, he said, brought on by some acute affection of the brain. The sick woman opened her eyes, but they wandered vaguely round the room and the few words she spoke were quite incoherent. She was wildly delirious.

Hardly was the door closed on Emma Lersner than the bell rang again. It was Camilla who, after a few hours rest in her father's house, had come to see her sister. What she found here and heard from Doctor Lehrbach was hardly worse than the news she brought from home. Herr von Düren still lay unconscious; his wound had been carefully examined by two famous surgeons, and they both regarded it as even more serious than the physician had thought it.

Camilla told her story with sobs and sighs. Lehrbach had sent, every hour or so, to make enquiries at his father-in-law's, but none of the messages brought by the servant had given him such a picture of the hopelessness of the situation as Camilla reported. He hid his face in his hand. It was too much at once—misfortune was threatening him on every side.

Suddenly he started up. In the midst of his own sorrows he remembered with a pang his young friend's critical position. Now, at once, he must go to see Otto in prison; not merely to offer him the consolation of a fast friendship in his desolation, but to investigate the case without any delay, so as to nip the mischief in the bud, before the matter came under public discussion.

"A nurse will be here in an hour or so," he said to Camilla. "Till then can you stay with her? I have some business I must attend to."

In a few minutes his carriage had conveyed him to the House of Detention. In the Director's office he was informed that the case of Otto Wellner was already under investigation; Lehrbach therefore went at once to the magistrate and requested, as counsel for the accused, to be admitted to see him.

Otto was sitting with an air of dull indifference

by the rickety little table, when the warder opened the door and Doctor Lehrbach came in. At the sight of this unexpected visitor Otto started visibly. Shame at the helpless misery of his position, defiance and bitter hatred of his accuser, with the torturing sense of real guilt towards the man who now came towards him holding out both hands like a sympathizing father — this chaos of mind held him silent.

"I have come," said the lawyer, "to offer you my services, without reserve or remuneration. I know exactly what I am risking. I am familiar with good society, as it calls itself, and its theories of good taste and delicacy. People will say: 'Lehrbach is heartless. His wife's father lies dying, the victim of an abominable crime; his wife is hovering on the brink of the grave in consequence of the horrors she has gone through; and he comes forward to defend the man who, in the opinion of all the world, is the murderer.'— This will be the tune, with a hundred variations — and they will still stick to it even when your innocence is proved as clear as day.— Never mind; I act from a sense of duty which lifts me far above such prejudices. Why, Otto, the mere look of proud and bitter scorn that your face wore when the police led you away would have been enough to

destroy every suspicion, even if I had not known you well—even if your poetic gaze, which I have so often noticed, did not unfailingly reveal the noble temperament of an artist, as clearly and eloquently as the beautiful works which Herr Heinzius had sent me to look at—I mean those sketches which you so madly wanted to destroy."

Otto was strangely thrilled. In spite of the anxieties and troubles which surrounded him, memory suddenly dawned on his soul like a burning star. Those had been golden days when he had dreamed that he was blest with a genius for art—a delicious intoxication dissipated by the ruthless verdict of the master who had demolished his bright dreams. Gauthier-Naroslaw had not known—how should he?—that the sketches he was looking at had grown, as it were, like weeds in a wilderness—and Otto himself had never thought of this. What was peculiar in his untutored talent—its grandeur and originality of conception—was disfigured by a multitude of faults which only diligent study could remedy; the master's eye, accustomed to the faultless beauty of his own creations, was shocked by these defects. "A very delightful amateur!"—It was meant kindly and well, but the words fell on the impetuous youth, with a force as overwhelming

as that of the hand of Jehovah on the veil of the Temple.

All these recollections flashed upon Otto at the mention of his sketches; for an instant the present had vanished from his ken.

Lehrbach had watched the effect of his words. His confidence rose.

"Yes," he said, "for the future I shall insist on the fact: You are by nature an artist. Gauthier-Naroslaw has reconsidered his opinion — I will tell you all about that another time, when we have leisure and are more in the vein.— Artist-natures — this, just now, is the important point — enjoy *à priori* an immunity from all suspicion of base deeds. The records of statistics prove this — and it is very intelligible. A thoroughly artistic feeling is inconceivable as linked with the psychological conditions that conduce to a vulgar crime. In the ideal world there is no place for what is coarse, low, and mean. The artist is averse to crime, it is foreign to him because it is hideous. Those who have wings do not wade through the mire of the streets. You may believe me, my dear fellow, your childlike feeling for beauty — the child and the genius have always lived in brotherhood — has often brought a quiet smile to my lips. The contrast between your frankly

heedless nature and the routine of our cut-and-dried, formal society rouses a sense of humor — perhaps, too, a feeling of envy. Yes, I have envied you your glowing youth, when I have noted your delighted study of the folds of some flowing drapery, your heightened color at the sight of a brilliant drawing-room, your rapt contemplation of an elegant or a beautiful woman. Long before I had the faintest hint of your early attempts I read what it was that stirred your soul — and saw how your eye looked forth on this motley world with the enquiring gaze of a child, not knowing where to let it rest."

Otto Wellner was speechless. More than once had he asked himself how it was that this man's wonderful penetration should fail him precisely in the matter which concerned him most nearly? How it was that his miserable passion for Lucinda had not long since been patent to that discerning eye? To be sure, young as he was, he knew how often a noble trustfulness hoodwinks the judgment; how often even the connoisseur trips in his criticism when it deals with objects or circumstances that concern him personally. But he now saw Doctor Lehrbach's blindness in a new light: the lawyer, it would seem, had been so confiding only because, in

measuring another by his own lofty standard, he had put a wrong interpretation on the facts. — A sublime folly, of which none but a truly noble and generous nature could be capable!

For the first time since that fevered interview with Lucinda Otto felt sincere contrition. He felt small indeed, in the presence of the man whom he would have betrayed and injured in defiance of every obligation of gratitude, if Lucinda herself had not paused to reflect.

What a heart was this! What a true, generous and devoted friend! While Otto was plotting against him with all the instincts of his will, his protector had not only done all that he could for his advancement, in the common sense of the word; he had detected the secret of that old, unconfessed wound which had never healed, and from which the young man suffered even more perhaps than from his passion for Lucinda. Lehrbach had been thinking and working for him — while he had been weak and mean-spirited; he had sounded the depths of that sorrowing artist's temperament and brought light into the darkness of its aching timidity. And now, to crown all, this man had come to the cell of the hapless youth, regardless of the voice of an inimical world — had come as a father to save him from perishing.

A strange feeling came over Otto, as though in his throbbing breast something were cooling down and taking form, which, till now, had been seething and surging like hot lava.

During the dreadful hours of the past night, spent in sleepless cogitation, one doubt had forced itself upon him again and again; as he remembered the oath he had sworn to Lucinda, he had wondered, with a shudder, whether it still could bind him. She herself would speak, he said to himself, she must; it was impossible that she could leave him to die thus. But now he was quite clear about it: his oath was sacred and irrevocable — nay, even if Lucinda were to come forward and declare the truth, he would say: "This woman is crazed." — He must defy even death for the sake of the man whose happiness and honor, from this hour forth, must come before his own safety or his own future prospects. He did not reflect that Lucinda's intervention would be in no degree nullified by his denial; he was merely feeling his way in the confusion of his own emotions. One thing only was immutable whether for good or for evil: his determination never to break silence.

He threw himself into his friend's arms with a sense of Redemption, thanked him warmly, and

then calmly gave him all the information as to details which, as his counsel, he had a right to know.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANASTASIUS VON SUNTHELM was lingering over his breakfast like a true epicure. It was long since he had been in so rosy a mood. The occurrences in Von Düren's library had had a happy effect on his spirits; and now, when from various sources he had obtained later details of the progress of affairs, his triumphant good-humor was improving every minute, and it was with an air of aristocratic well-being that he sat sipping the old port wine which Ephraim Peltzer had lately embittered to his taste. By Bacchus the great! No better luck could have befallen the worthy baron than this catastrophe to Otto Wellner. Otto Wellner was the only living soul who had any direct interest in following up the clue which Ephraim Peltzer had surreptitiously obtained. If a propitious Fate should clear him out of the way, the baron was afraid of no one else.

He was absorbed in meditation. At bottom he was, he was sure, a very good fellow; he was will-

ing to grant Herr von Düren a long, happy and successful life. Still, if it should prove to be the purpose of an inscrutable Providence that, in consequence of his wound, Herr von Düren should quit this sublunary world and depart to everlasting glory, Anastasius could find comfort in the reflection that the sting of his regrets would be greatly mitigated by the dangers of Otto's position. In any case, Herr Wellner would, for some little time, be sufficiently secluded from the society of the capital for Baron Anastasius to feel safe from him. Then even Peltzer, that barefaced horse-leech, might threaten disclosure and be defied! A man like Peltzer who should try to assert the rights of a condemned criminal to the baron's possessions on the strength of a few letters, was, on the face of it, unworthy of belief — a Sunthelm–Hiddensöe might count on the weight of his social position and name to win half the battle. Ah! and Peltzer had overreached himself too since that memorable evening! and though Anastasius did not actually want to throw Ephraim overboard, he felt that he was in a position to beat down his levies of blackmail to within reasonable limits.

Meditating on all these favorable conjunctions, Anastasius von Sunthelm–Hiddensöe drank his

fine old port with unqualified satisfaction. In this leisurely and happy mood, he had time to think over three or four minor affairs which he had put in hand with his usual triumphant success during the winter season.

What a series of delightful contrasts!

Here a rich *Andante-maëstoso:* the Juno-like charms of a Polish countess in reduced circumstances, stirred his emotions; there the delicious dreamy *Larghetto* that he felt as he recalled the blue eyes and pale, yellow hair of Miss Alice, an English blonde; here again the melting, luscious *Adagio* of an utterly worthless actress, who recited verses from Rückert's "*Liebesfrühling*" and expected a bracelet or a basket of bonbons for every line; then, finally, that bewitching *Allegretto* called Adele—of all these facile fair ones the most seductive, and at the same time the pertest, the most inconsiderate and most ungrateful. . . . !

He had not seen that pretty little hussy for a week. There were always certain difficulties in the way of their meeting; she was a little below the mark in rank; it was compromising to be seen with her in public; she was quite capable of answering a whispered compliment with an outspoken jest containing some allusion to his age, or casting a disagreeable reflection on the situation.

"Too bad!" thought Anastasius. Just now, in his present airy, rosy frame of mind, he longed to see her. The English woman with her big blue eyes had suited him well enough during the anxious time he had just gone through; now that life was a little freer his fancy roved to the youthful freshness of the little shop-girl, who could after all be made to understand. . . .

He rang to have the breakfast-things removed. It had been his custom for years to take his luxurious *déjeuner à la fourchette* in his study — if indeed this elegant gentleman's boudoir, where only an occasional business-note or *billet-doux* was ever concocted, deserved such a dignified name. By this hour the baroness was always up and out, in the pursuit of her numerous philanthropic avocations, and of late, more especially, in the interest of her newly-founded Magdalen-charity.

The baron wrote his note to Adele — line after line in elegant phraseology, frequent interjections with pretty epithets, enthusiastic assurances of unbounded admiration, and finally a proposal for an early meeting for which he offered the most flattering inducements.

He smiled complacently. He had confident hopes as to the results of this meeting, having spoken very seriously on the subject with the

Widow Tharow. She was prepared to support him and bring her maternal and superior influence to bear on the backward damsel. Indeed, as the head of the mysterious English class, she made it a point of honor; she had to reinstate herself in her own conceits after the trick that Martha Voss had played her. That foolish girl, with a monstrous disregard of Eric von Tyllichau's rank and dignity, had taken a panic, and rushed out into the dark one night. Frau Tharow had not got over this incident for above a week; in fact she had grown quite nervous, and still started at every ring at the door, thinking it might be some unwelcome emissary from the authorities to make enquiries as to the precise programme of her soirées.

"Your faithful friend A," wrote the baron and pressed the last page of his note in his blotting-book. The servant at this moment announced "Ephraim Peltzer."

"Oh come in, come in!" cried the baron almost jovially, and Peltzer entered with his usual audacity, with a familiar: "Good-morning" to the baron, in spite of the presence of the man-servant.

"And what do you want?" asked Anastasius, as soon as they were alone.

"Money," said Peltzer.

"Unlucky! I have none in hand just at present. And between ourselves: How long do you imagine you can carry on this system of forced loans?"

Peltzer tossed his head ironically: "If it is growing too much for you, perhaps Herr Wellner may be more accommodating. It is quite the same to me who pays me my little percentage."

"Might I ask you to speak a little lower?" whispered the baron angrily. "Not that I am at all afraid — certainly not. But it is well to be on the safe side, and it does not please me to hear you, of all people, talk so big in my house. Yes, you are astonished, I daresay; but you find me in the very mood to throw you and the whole affair to the dogs."

"As if you could!"

"Certainly I can. Of course I have burnt the papers you got for me."

"Of course. — But I have copies of them."

"That does not matter. You can put a great deal on paper if only the day is long enough."

Peltzer was on the point of divulging what he had hitherto kept secret: the fact, namely, that he possessed the original autograph of a particularly compromising note from the baron himself. But he thought better of it. This document, of which

Baron Anastasius had no suspicion, he must keep for his trump card in case of need.

"You seem very confident to-day," he said with a grin.

"I feel so," retorted Anastasius.

"And how about Widow Molbeck?"

"She is a half-crazy creature — a raving dreamer whom it ought to be easy enough to transfer to a lunatic asylum. Besides, what she might say is quite beside the question. The things a dying man says in the delirium of his last hours — pooh! They have strange fancies! — Again, Thiemssen . . . but why waste words? The thing is settled and done with. I cannot imagine what good it could do any one to reinstate Wellner in the possession of the money which will never do him any good — and at such a personal risk. It would not be the first time that the informer was 'hoist on his own petard.'"

"Indeed!" cried Peltzer. "Settled and done with? That remains to be seen. But one thing I should like to know: Why, if I turn 'informer,' should not Wellner get his money? And what do you mean by 'never do him any good?'"

"A strange question! — Do you never read the papers?"

"Oh! Because of that! To be sure, you were an energetic witness. 'There stands the villain! Seize him! Off with him! He is the murderer!'—Well, of course, I can understand that you would have much pleasure in seeing Wellner under a cloud — and so far as I am concerned I have not the smallest objection. But, luckily for him, we are neither of us his judges! No, my good friend, your little handful will not be enough to thicken the broth."

"I must decline the honor of being your good friend."

"Nay, you had better not. As a good friend I am not dangerous, as an enemy I might make even hell a little hotter for you. I should not care if you swore that you had actually seen it . . . I owe Wellner a grudge. But that it is a cowardly lie you know as well as I do."

"I should never swear to anything that was not strictly true," said the baron viciously. "But the truth can hold its own without any help from me — and if Von Düren dies in the course of the day, I would not give a copper for Wellner's chances."

He spoke with conviction. Anastasius, in fact, deceived by various false inferences, had persuaded himself that the deed was an act of Socialist re-

venge on the man who had insulted and injured the democratic party.

Peltzer was startled by his tone.

"Then you really, seriously believe. . . ."

But Sunthelm was waxing irritable.

"Suppose," said Peltzer, as a fresh idea flashed through his brain: "Suppose I could prove to you, out of hand, that Wellner is innocent?"

"You?"

"Yes — I."

He spoke with no less conviction than Sunthelm himself had done.

"Why should I make a secret of it?" said Ephraim, putting his hands in his pockets. "No one can touch me; mere intentions cannot be punished." And he proceeded to relate — but without mentioning Brönner's name — all the plot he had laid with the escaped convict, and how, at last, he had left it to him to carry it out single-handed.

"And now, what have you got to say?" he laughed mockingly. "The matter is plain enough? Heh? Your humble servant has the pig by the ear. Now, what do you think that the pleasure of seeing Wellner condemned may be worth?"

Anastasius had sunk back in his chair, completely demoralized: the certainty of his oppo-

nent's guilt had been so delightful, so comfortable! And now it had all ended in smoke; the whole edifice of his hopes had crumbled into dust. Ephraim Peltzer stood feasting on his discomfiture. However, the baron had soon reconciled himself to this new aspect of affairs.

"Listen to me," he said. "If that is true. . ."

"It is true — as true as daylight."

"Well; then it must be kept dark. And, what is more, you must throw your evidence into the scale to seal the fate of the prisoner."

"Perjury!" muttered Peltzer screwing up his eyes.

"Call it what you please. — You must declare. . . ."

"Well, go on."

"It cannot be worked out all in a minute; but something, — we can hit upon something. For instance you might have heard him planning it beforehand. You might prove that he had used expressions. . . ."

Ephraim Peltzer objected, but the baron interrupted him peevishly:

"You can think it over at home quite at your leisure. The knife, by the way, that is a piece of evidence! — You might say that you had seen it before in his hand; that you. . . ."

"Hm . . . not a bad idea, but difficult to carry out. Where could it have happened . . . Stay — that will do. The day when I made that first attempt, the fellow met me on the stairs. Hm . . . I had better mention the knife before I am questioned ?"

"Certainly. When you are examined the knife will be shown to you, and you will be asked whether you recognize the *corpus delicti.*"

"That is not very sharp of the gentlemen who examine us. However, it is a dirty business at the best. And it must strike every one that no one who knows him ever saw the knife in his possession. . . ."

"Not at all. The counsel for the prosecution will say, of course, that the defendant intentionally took very good care that no one should see the weapon. You need not be in the least uneasy; that will be all right."

"Indeed ?" said Peltzer. "You are really uncommonly clever, Herr Baron. But now to the main point. You understand, of course . . . however independent a man's views may be he has some scruples. I will say what has to be said; but it will cost you a good round sum. Say a hundred thousand marks (24,000 dollars). Half to be paid on the nail and half when Wellner is condemned.

Then I will pack myself off to America. You will gain by that at any rate, and be quit of me once for all."

"A hundred thousand marks! No, no; you put too high a price on your conscience. I am not indisposed to pay you well for the little service I require of you; but I do not throw my money about like a madman. You are overrating the value of your declaration, and your assistance is not so indispensable as you fancy. Wellner will be condemned even without that."

"Possibly, even without that. But he will quite certainly be acquitted if I name the real criminal. And that, of course, is what I shall do if Herr von Sunthelm is more close-fisted with his hundred-mark notes—which he came by so easily—than I think he ought to be. . . ."

Anastasius was silent; his eyes glared with impotent rage. To such eloquence as this he had no reply. He struggled a little longer, for, during the last few weeks, Peltzer had besieged him for supplementary "indemnification," "perquisites," "expenses," and other forms of blackmail. Now the baron saw himself compelled to make a fresh sacrifice, greater and more pinching than the former ones. Still, if Peltzer kept his bargain the result would be triumphant. But who could tell...?

The baron went up to the trophy of arms on the wall and took down an elegant jewelled revolver. He stood for some minutes looking at it, and then, as if lost in thought, cocked it.

"Listen to me," he said with forced self-control. "This once I will again give in to your shameless extortion; but I swear to you it is for the last time. You almost drive me to the climax of absurdity; to destroy myself rather than part with what you are gradually robbing me of. But I have no taste for such jests. — If, after having received from me the second half of your plunder, you ever — once — set foot on this threshold I will shoot you with this pretty little revolver, so dead that you will not even hear it crack. And I will do it no less if you break your word — if you ever breathe a syllable to any living soul of what you know, or blunder in your story. I am tired of being the sport of a wretch like you, and I will shoot you, as I say, come what may. At the worst there will still be a bullet for myself, and I shall not lose half as much as you by getting out of the farce of life. What the world has to give me I have enjoyed to the full, while you are not yet thirty, and your thick skull is as full of clumsy illusions as it is of insolence and brutality. Now, not another word. Go!"

"Then you agree. . . ."

"Go!" repeated the baron. "What I have said is plain enough. The first instalment shall be ready by the end of the week. Now, be off, or anger will be too much for me and I shall put an end at once to this fool's play. . . ." And he raised the revolver.

"No nonsense, Herr Baron!" said Ephraim turning pale. "I am going. Saturday next then."

When he was safe outside the door he rubbed his hands with a hoarse chuckle.

"Bravo!" he said to himself. "Aye, aye; a word in season! A thorough-paced rascal is this baron. Well, he may be quite easy; I will keep my word. I will not stop here forty-eight hours after I have pocketed the second fifty thousand."

Staggering with excitement he turned down the street; he felt a dull impulse to break something, to shout or bellow, his satisfaction was so unbounded.

"Donkey!" he railed at a lame pedlar who stumbled and knocked him with the corner of his pack; and when the man looked up at him in surprise, he flung him a thaler saying: "There, go and drink yourself blind old gaffer." And then he hurried off to act on the advice he had given.

The baron too was much excited. He had been very much in earnest; things could not go on at this pace: anything rather than that. Again his eye fell on the revolver; he sat down and took it in his hand once more.

It was a strange sensation — if he were only to set the mouth of it against his heart, or, to the right, against his temple and just to draw back his finger, all that whirl of images and sensations called Life would vanish into nothingness. The sun would lose its glory, the world would perish with all its beauty and delights, but also with all the gnawing anxiety which, during these few weeks, had lain so heavy on his soul — every annoyance, every worry, every possibility of disgrace. . . .

He shuddered. A scion of the Sunthelm-Hiddensöes — to be unmasked as a common felon, to be reduced to beggary, expelled from the society of which he had been a recognized leader, its crown and glory! . . . The thought was appalling. In the insatiable craving for life which flowed in his blood, Anastasius had never dreamed that the sight of such a weapon, and the option of using it as a means of escape from the curse of existence, could be a source of so much comfort. This little jewelled revolver had suddenly become

his best friend, and he hung the elegant toy up on its hooks with a grateful smile.

Presently he took up the note to Adele in his fine white fingers; then he looked out at the driving snow-storm and wondered whether he would go to a morning concert for which he had a ticket — he might perhaps meet that dark-eyed Italian girl whom he had seen at the opera two nights since; for all that was fashionable met twice a month at these matinées at the Concert rooms.

He sighed. The very moment when his eyes might be meeting the fiery Italian's might be that which would decide his fate? Might not that Thiemssen . . . . ?

A thought recurred to his mind which had often suggested itself already. Why should not he, Anastasius, be as shrewd and knowing as Ephraim Peltzer? The business which had so long been buried had been stirred to life again these last few weeks. Would it not be better to convert all his property into a portable form and setting to Europe like the sun, rise again in renewed glory on the western shore of the ocean? By this arrangement Anastasius would leave behind him a somewhat formidable array of creditors, not to mention his estimable wife Eleonora, who might then devote herself more

fervently than ever to the worship of noble Humanity.

The prospect was a tempting one and yet, in practice, the plan was psychologically preposterous. Every fibre of his being had struck root in his home in the imperial capital; it was here that his blue blood gave him pre-eminence over the mere moneyed families; here he was a prince, a hero, a demi-god. The indefinable consciousness of moving at the summit of society was no less a "condition of existence" to the baron's vanity than the various more tangible joys of life. Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe, taken out of the brilliant setting of his natural surroundings—a stranger, under an alias in the land of the barbarians to whom *chic* and pedigrees were alike unknown—Death rather!

"Death rather!" he murmured half aloud at the end of his cogitations. Then he ordered the carriage round. The note for Adele he would send presently, after the concert, by his trustworthy commissionaire to Toussaint and Gerold's shop. The answer need only be Yes or No.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE days after this Otto Wellner was examined for the second time. Herr Seeborn, a judge well known as being experienced in such investigations, received the prisoner with the grave dignity of an examining lawyer who has collected and scheduled a large mass of evidence, and is perfectly convinced that the statements of the accused can do little to alter the aspect of affairs as they present themselves to his mind.

"Take a seat," said Herr Seeborn affably.—Never but in cases where he saw a foregone conclusion was he so benevolently and politely considerate. After the usual formalities he went on as follows:

"You are charged with having attacked Herr George von Düren at about eleven o'clock on the night of the fifteenth of this month, in the library of his private residence, and with having wounded him so as to endanger his life. I will not pause to qualify this crime; more especially as we must wait to see whether the unfortunate victim dies of the wound, as seems only too probable. I need only observe that the counsel for the crown will

in all probability charge you with murder, or with the intent to murder. It can therefore only be to your own interest to declare the truth. If you persist, as you have hitherto persisted, in denying all guilt, there can be no doubt as to your fate. If you confess, the consideration may arise as to whether the wound, be it mortal or not, may not have been given without premeditation, manslaughter without malice prepense. Perhaps you do not know the distinction made by the law between the two cases. Paragraph 211 of the Penal Code runs as follows: 'Any one who intentionally kills a man, if he has killed him after premeditation, has committed murder and shall be punished with death.' But paragraph 212 goes on to say: 'Any one who intentionally kills a man, if he has done so without premeditation, shall be punished with imprisonment for not less than five years.' Finally, paragraph 213 affords the criminal the chance that the jury may find that there are mitigating circumstances. In your particular case a number of important facts weigh against the possibility contemplated in paragraph 212,—however, circumstantial evidence is often untrustworthy. I regard it as a duty in my place to tell you of the possibility of a less stern view of the case, in order that you may not put yourself

out of the reach of it by foolish and obstinate denial of the deed and of your motives. Nothing but a free and full confession, with a clear account of everything that led up to the catastrophe, can throw a ray of alleviating light on your guilt, if it is in fact less than, up to this moment, I have reason to believe. So now speak!"

"I am ready to answer any question you may choose to ask me with perfect truthfulness," said Otto huskily.

"Very good. Then in the first place: Do you confess yourself guilty of having dealt the fatal blow to Von Düren with the knife that lies here?"

"No."

"Do you recognize the weapon?"

"No."

"It is not your property?"

"No."

"I must once more remind you of the law as I have just explained it to you. I allow you five minutes for reflection."

"I need no reflection. I am innocent."

The judge shrugged his shoulders.

"You adhere to that statement?"

"I do."

"As you will. The circumstances, thank God!

are so clear that your confession is immaterial to the course of justice."

Otto Wellner took a deep, difficult breath. Then he said with firm determination:

"I can only repeat my statement, which is absolutely true. I am not guilty."

Seeborn turned away with a gesture as much as to say: "those who will not listen must be made to feel." Then, turning over his notes and depositions, he proceeded to examine the prisoner in detail, while his clerk, a tall, white-faced scrivener, sat ready to write at his dictation.

The first question was as to the time at which Wellner had entered the library; the second, as to his motive for going there.

"Very good," said Herr Seeborn, as Otto's reply on the second head was not satisfactorily explicit. "Have the goodness to record as follows: I went into the library a few minutes before Herr von Düren. It was an æsthetic whim that made me quit the company. I wanted to see the moon!"

The clerk smiled as he wrote it.

"I did not say that," interrupted Otto impetuously. "Put in that way it sounds quite childish."

"Forbear from such remarks!" cried the lawyer with a glare.

"My observation is in no respect personal. I only beg to have what I say set down exactly, without any infusion of coloring."

"Then repeat what you did say."

Otto repeated his explanation, and it sounded rather better; but he felt distinctly that his pretext was insufficient. He pictured to himself the jury who would try him — worthy householders, locksmiths, brokers, men of science, and merchants — all highly-respectable men and certainly not devoid of a considerable share of intelligence; he already saw the clerk's smile spreading to the faces of the twelve jurors — and that smile, that defective sympathy for an impulse which certainly might have actuated him — though, as a fact, he had invented it as a pretext, that sceptical sneer meant death to him.

The examiner went on.

"Do you recognize the lock of hair which the victim held in his hand, as being your own?"

"No."

"But it was compared with yours at the time, and the result was decidedly against you."

"I cannot see the nape of my neck," retorted Otto bitterly. "If it matched as Baron von Sunthelm asserted, it is a mere accident. That young man at the side table has just the same

brownish fair hair. Do you charge him with the crime?"

"I must prohibit any such irrelevant comments. When you are brought to trial it will be seen what is accident and what is not."

After a long course of cross-examination on these points the lawyer proceeded to enquire as to Otto Wellner's relations to the wounded man.

"You are a Socialist?" he asked.

"No."

"What! You even deny that?"

"I entirely deny it. I *was* a Socialist — just as a man is sometimes drunk or stunned. An exalted state of feeling, produced by the eloquence of a clever speaker and the irritation of disappointment — due to the vagueness of my own ideas on the subject: this was the sum total of my Socialism. An hour's calm reflection, a single unprejudiced glance at the true aspect of that utopian madness was sufficient to cure me."

"This is mere talk. You did in fact provoke a gentleman of good family to challenge you, out of sheer rage at the moral dignity with which he met your socialist principles. Now, is this so or is it not?"

"Not quite accurately. The matter under dis-

cussion was an insult aimed at a friend of mine, and not any socialist principle. . . ."

The judge turned over the depositions.

"Quite correct: a crazy revolutionary who was characterized by that gentleman as a Socialist and for that reason rejected as a member of a highly-respectable Society; Roderich Lund by name."

Otto was silent.

"What have you to reply?" asked the lawyer.

"Only what you will refuse to believe. Before the duel took place I had completely changed my views. I had thoroughly convinced myself of the mischievous character of the Socialist propaganda. Irrespective of this, I can only repeat that the quarrel was not about principles; and I may add that it was his fault, and not mine, that an arrangement was not arrived at."

Seeborn shook his head contemptuously.

"If your party can boast of many such valiant adherents the State is certainly to be congratulated!"

Otto shrugged his shoulders.

"To be sure," continued the examiner, "your position is an excuse for you. At the same time, allow me to point out to you that your line of defence must be regarded as a complete failure.

We have ample evidence to prove that, even at a later date, you proclaimed and defended the principles which you now stigmatize as utopian, and defended them with wild fanaticism. Do you know a certain Fritz Pröhle?"

"Certainly; we are fellow-lodgers."

"He, like you, is an enthusiastic Socialist. Do you happen to recollect that you and the said Fritz Pröhle, some weeks since, spent an evening in seditious talk, in a coffee-house at the north end of the town, and solemnly agreed to commit a deed on the first favorable opportunity which would be a sort of prologue to a general attack on the state and civic order. . . . ?"

"I did not know. . . ."

The judge again searched his papers.

"I have here the depositions of three shopmen who perfectly remember that evening. Pröhle himself does not contradict their statements. It was the same evening that the locksmith Meynert, your mouthpiece, addressed a meeting at Weidner's Brewery . . . . I see, you remember?"

Otto looked at the floor.

"But the details were different," he replied in a low voice.

"That remains to be proved. — Well then,

how does it happen that, just before the fatal fifteenth, seditious pamphlets containing such passages as these. . . ." and leaning over his desk Seeborn read aloud with marked emphasis a fire-breathing tirade by an anonymous writer, in which hatred of social order seemed to have reached a climax. The author called on his adherents to turn in criminal fury on every individual who could be regarded as the oppressor or the enemy of the working-classes, confidently asserting that the first blow which struck one of these tyrants would sever a vital nerve in society at large, and ending with an enquiry as to who would be the "self-sacrificing Brutus" to strike that blow.

When he had read this the lawyer looked up: "Now, how does it happen that this frantic incitement to revolt and murder should coincide so exactly with your unfortunate adventure in the Von Dürens' house?"

"This is the first I have heard of the document in question," said Otto gloomily.

"Those that can may believe that. A copy of this revolutionary pamphlet was found in the pocket of your friend Pröhle, when he was locked up for the night after a row in a public-house. Would Herr Pröhle have hesitated to inform you

concerning a paper that he kept about him, even at night and in a tavern."

"He himself will confirm my statement that I know nothing about it."

"Yes, yes, and so he does. The pamphlet, he says, was put into his hands by some unknown person, in the night of the fifteenth. But such subterfuges are, of course, absolutely aimless."

Herr Seeborn pushed his spectacles up on to his high forehead and leaned back in his chair as though to take breath.

"I must say," he said, "that it argues a remarkable degree of audacity, to assume such a demeanor as you seem to consider appropriate to the occasion. You frequent socialist gatherings; you applaud socialist agitators; you join the democrat Pröhle in cursing all civil institutions; you all agree that the deed shall follow the word—a pledge which Pröhle for his part has fulfilled to the letter; he, too, stands charged with various assaults, equally the outcome of his indignation against the opponents of Socialism; and he was only let out of prison till further notice, when it was proved that no serious results were to be apprehended, though that perhaps is only owing to the fact that his opponents were in superior force.—You chose your victim and your

opportunity with greater care; — but this is only by the way. To resume. You throw yourself into the breach for a notorious Socialist, this Lund; you take the opportunity of proclaiming yourself ready to defend the revolutionary programme to the death — yes to the death. A number of witnesses are agreed on that point; you grossly insult a gentleman who bravely opposes you, and with the evident intention of provoking him to challenge you; you fight him and — as the scar on your forehead proves — receive the baptism of blood, so to speak, in your atrocious cause; — and now that this is all blown to the winds: you turn and twist everything like a juggler. This is carrying the '*si fecisti, nega*' to the very acme of absurdity!"

"This is no case of mere denial. It is the way the circumstances are stated . . ." But the lawyer interrupted him.

"It is well," he said. "The clerk's report will have recorded your demurrer in due form. Will you now, as briefly as possible, answer me a few more questions. At four o'clock in the afternoon of the fifteenth there was a riot outside the Hedwigskirche. The Socialist party of that quarter of the city assembled expressly to insult one of our most distinguished fellow-citizens, and

you, driven to frenzy by the dismissal of Pröhle and some of his fellows, were the soul and head of the demonstration. You, who had been invited as a guest to witness a religious celebration, were not ashamed to give vent to your unjust and malignant feelings towards a man who had befriended and favored you, and to organize such a disgraceful demonstration; nay, you even made a cynical display of your influence. No, do not interrupt me! It is proved beyond dispute that you encouraged the howling and abusive mob to fresh outbreak and invective, and that you gave the signal for the final chorus of cheers. Is it so or not?"

Otto was paralyzed. His sense of justice was positively crushed under the weight of misinterpretation which could thus precisely reverse his real purpose and proceedings. Suddenly the hot blood flew to his face; his breast heaved, and emboldened by his complete innocence, he thundered out:

"It is a scandalous lie!"

His accuser looked keenly in his face.

"What is a lie?" he said.

"All, everything. It is false that I knew anything whatever about the demonstration, much more that I planned or prompted it. It is false

that I encouraged the mob.— Lies from beginning to end. Who can have distorted the facts into such a hideous and base falsehood? I was horrified at the brutal attack, and tried to tranquillize the crowd; I did my best to get them to disperse."

"Then you admit that you have some influence over the crowd which you now stigmatize as the mob — that mob which nevertheless broke out into shouts and cheers in your honor? Or do you pretend to deny that your name was in every mouth, that you were hailed as a champion, as a hero and leader?"

Otto did his utmost to explain how this error on the part of the working-men had arisen. He emphasized the fact that his presence subsequently at the wedding-party at Von Düren's house distinctly contradicted the theory that Seeborn had adopted. His eloquence fell and left no trace on the iron conviction of the man, who was prepared to put an unfavorable interpretation on every fact and argument.

Otto Wellner, by degrees, found himself in a state of mind that oscillated between despair and bewilderment. He could not have been more astonished if Justice had brought forward the most trivial incidents of his childhood in evidence of

his guilt. Whichever way he turned he saw only confusion, misconception, hostile collusion which he was impotent to frustrate. The only way by which he could improve his position was closed to him, the disclosure namely of the real reason of his presence on the scene of the crime. The oath of secrecy which he had so lately renewed in his mind, held him with fetters of iron; never had he felt it more binding than now when the flood of falsehood and misconstruction was so near closing over his head.

What a hollow, dreary, miserable world it was! How pitiable the human race! groping in the dark — not merely benighted with regard to the great problems of existence, but groping in the dark through the mire of daily life, with eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear! Society seemed composed of bloodthirsty workingmen and dissipated spendthrifts, of bedizened debauchees who married a fortune with a wife as an accessory, only to waste the money they had so unrighteously acquired and tread the wife under foot; of old roués who debased and corrupted all who approached them; of contemptible pharisees who trumpeted their good works through all the streets by the help of servile flatterers; of intriguing parvenus who oppressed genius and

patronized mediocrity; of bankrupt speculators and usurers, of cheats and simpletons — and it was this Society that has chosen him as an easy and innocent scapegoat; to bear the punishment for its own thousand mean and evil deeds!

Well, the impotent victim could only long all the more fervently for some firm foothold at last in the midst of this "Slough of Despond" — and he found it in his own steadfastness and the unassailable strength of his honor as a man. The blacker and the gloomier his fancy pictured men and things, the more triumphant and radiant rose that firm resolve; and in spite of all his weakness and shortcomings he felt a martyr — a saint — as compared with his traducers.

"I will be silent," he said to himself, "and rather throttle myself with my own hand than give these fools the satisfaction of finding me a traitor."

During the last few days his views as to Lucinda's probable conduct had undergone a change. As he judged her now, with all the passion that lurked in her, she was rigid and stern by nature, with something of the ancient Roman about her. She would be as inexorable to him as to herself; unmoved by his miserable fate. Regard for her husband's peace and happiness, and a woman's

shuddering horror of public disgrace would be — as Otto believed — stronger motives than pity for him who had been the cause of her moral struggle and temporary defeat. He knew full well: the fault she had committed — which a hundred women would have laughed at as a pardonable peccadillo — she would condemn with the vehemence of a consuming remorse. She had been almost fainting with terror-stricken shame only at meeting him alone, and how could she endure if all the world should know . . . ? A world that would certainly never believe her innocent; a world which had learnt by long experience to calculate probabilities to a nicety . . . The result could not be doubtful. Seeing everything in the most unfavorable light, Otto was fully convinced that no earthly consideration would prompt Lucinda to take the onus of the disclosure on herself, particularly as its importance, as bearing on the question of his guilt, would probably not occur to her. In short he stood alone, forsaken; and his determination to wait in self-possession was not founded on even a distant hope but simply on his manly pride.

Otto was so full of the dignity of his self-respect that he scarcely heeded anything more that the judge said to him. He answered his search-

ing interrogatory almost mechanically; the whole gist of the examination being to prove a hostile feeling on the part of the accused towards Herr von Düren. Every question made this clearer, and all the incidents subsequent to the demonstration: Otto's turning pale as he went past Von Düren in the church, his wish to leave the party—all this and much else was set in such a doubtful light by the statements of the witnesses, among whom Baron von Sunthelm distinguished himself by the vividness of his impressions, that Otto himself would have marvelled at this concatenation of details if he had been capable of thought.

Seeborn made a sign to his clerk who read out the cross-examination in a harsh croak; Otto made an effort and listened. The whole story had assumed a strange and sinister coloring.

But he was so weary, so worn out by these hours of examination that he had not strength to remonstrate; perhaps, too, he saw that it would be lost pains. He took up the pen with a cold qualm at his heart and signed the document. Then he was led back to his cell.

CHAPTER X.

It was Sunday again. Frau Lersner was sitting by the window in her comfortable parlor looking up somewhat timidly in her daughter's face; Emma stood before her with her hands lightly folded, and a melancholy smile on her lips.

"Your question had altogether puzzled me," said Emma. "I have been thinking of it all day—and now I feel as if it had been snatched away from me. Pray let us do everything just the same as usual."

"Do you really mean it? Keep Christmas as usual when our troubles are not yet settled. . . ?"

"He is innocent. And this very day Doctor Lehrbach himself told me that things were not looking very badly for him."

"What?" said the mother. "You have been to him to-day."

"Yes. I went after church."

"And you did not tell me before?"

"You were so busy; and then Herr Pröhle came in. . . ."

"Well, that need not have prevented it."

"Yes, it did. I could see very plainly that he

believes Herr Wellner to be guilty; that weighed upon me and I could not say anything."

"And what does Herr Lehrbach say?"

"That I might be quite easy: that he would find the clue to the riddle all in good time."

"What riddle?"

"Why the one important question as to what Herr Wellner could have been in the library for at that hour."

"Then he, even, does not think that Wellner is telling the truth?"

"No. But that, he says, makes no difference; that he may have the very best reasons for keeping his motive secret."

"Strange!"

"Yes, and I asked him what he meant. He held out his hand, suddenly, with such a queer look in his eyes and sighed and said: 'I have my own notions on the subject. But by hook or by crook I will bring the truth to light and it will all come right still; you will see.'"

"Hm, he said that, did he?"

"Word for word. And I have a feeling that it will be unlucky if we spend Christmas as if we were in mourning. I have grown quite superstitious lately . . . Herr Wellner, himself, will feel miserable enough, to be sure, on Christmas night,

and dreadfully lonely; but Good Heavens! he is a man and will not give way and be crushed like a woman, and he has his books now, thank God! and can occupy himself. . . ."

"Child," said Frau Lersner after a pause, "you are grown strange of late, you are different from what you used to be. Tell me, Emma — if it were Pröhle, for instance, who was accused of this murder — you would not care so much . . . ? Do you think you would?"

The girl blushed scarlet and her mother drew her down to her and stroked her hair.

"Tell me, child," she said coaxingly.

At the tone of her voice Emma's self-control melted suddenly into tears. She threw herself into her mother's arms and for some minutes cried silently.

The plan of keeping Christmas just as usual was entirely approved by Adele, who came in about an hour after.

"Of course! Quite right. There is no good in sitting with our heads on one side," she eagerly exclaimed. "I did not like to be the first to say so, for every one would have cried out: 'Just like Adele with her heartlessness and her love of

pleasure!' But I take life as it comes. We worried ourselves about that horrid Pröhle; and three days after he turned up again all right, as large as life; and the little affair has had the most soothing effect on his nerves. He has cooled down from his wild quarrelsome ways and grown quite bashful. Now, aunt, you need not look at me like a father-confessor — I am not comparing Pröhle with Herr Wellner. All I mean is that things always look blackest at the beginning. And really if we were to put on mourning for all our lodgers' troubles we should never smile again. There is Herr Lund! he seems to be in a pretty temper for Christmas. As I passed his room I heard him swearing and shoving the furniture about, as if he were mad.— Then there is Heinzius! Merciful Heaven! Ever since he has given up his place at Von Düren's he looks like a weeping-willow in a fog; though between you and me, I suspect the reckoning for that premature banquet at the 'Thorn-bush' has as much to do with it as his young friend's misfortunes . . . But gracious me, children! is all life put together worth so much heartache and sighing? Why the house might be burnt to the ground one night, or the ceiling might fall in, or the cholera come down upon us, and then, whether we care or not, it

would be all over with us — the game played out like a candle."

"She is right after all, mother," said Emma gently, as Frau Lersner shook her head. "We will do our best to make things pleasant and help the gentlemen to forget their troubles."

"Bravo!" said Adele. "That is the right way to my mind. And you say you are quite confident that no harm can come to your precious Otto."

Emma turned away. Adele crossing her arms planted herself with saucy defiance in front of her aunt and went on:

"Well, aunt, and do you mean to make up your mind to agree with us? Upon my word you are making a very solemn face to-day! I tell you what; we are going to set to work at once, as if we meant it. I shall go to the Christmas fair this very afternoon; Pröhle may come with me and carry the Christmas tree home — he is always complaining that he has nothing to do. And as to the presents — that is my concern. Look there! That stupid cross that Herr Toussaint gave me as a good-conduct prize — you know; I sold it yesterday . . . ."

She had taken out her purse and poured out four gold pieces which she displayed on the palm of her hand.

"Half of it — only do not tell any one — I have lent to the weeping-willow — Heinzius. The poor man is half crazy with being in arrears for his rent and his breakfast; you have no idea how sensitive he is. He was within an ace of pawning his coat, but I told him he might save himself the trouble; twenty pfennigs was the most he would get on the old rag and the messenger would cost him sixty, so that he would do better to give the forty to the waiter at the 'Thorn-bush,' who made such a fuss over getting nothing for himself.— Only just now I saw Heinzius rushing along the cross street with a crowd at his heels. He is well known now at the 'Thorn-bush' and sits a fixture there, for two hours every morning over one pot of lager beer, staring about him like a man looking out for a wife. And now the worry about Wellner, and about paying for his breakfast and his lodgings . . . ."

"But why on earth does he say nothing about it to us?" Emma broke in.

"You, you? Well I really begin to think you are incapable of taking care of yourself! Can't you see that the man is over head and ears in love with you? So of course he is on his best behavior — a man always is with the object of his adoration."

"You certainly are in a brilliant vein!" said Emma shrugging her shoulders.

"I am, indeed; and why not? You, yourself said . . . . But hark! Good Heavens! There is Pröhle groaning out his 'Ah can it ever be!' Sentimental or nothing! — What a world it is! Well, let us have something to eat pray, and soon, too.—Oh! that concertina."

Frau Lersner had retired to the kitchen; Emma went to the cupboard and took out the plates and spoons. Alone with her cousin, she felt a little uncomfortable; she feared that Adele might have discovered what her mother had guessed, but had not put into words — but Adele, she knew, would be less merciful. However, Fräulein Jakoby did not seem inclined to speak again of Otto — and indeed, the subject had been so thoroughly thrashed out and discussed from every point of view by all the inhabitants of the house that it had become to most of them a real weariness. Adele, still with her arms folded, walked up and down the room, while Emma was laying the table.

"Tell me," she began, suddenly standing still: "Do you know why Pröhle was turned off from Von Düren's?"

"I believe it was because he is a socialist."

Adele shook her head.

"That was not at the bottom of it. Why, what on earth can he know of politics. It is as much as he can do to put two and two together. — Not a bit of it; listen to me — only you must not tell a soul. There is a certain gentleman — never mind his name — who comes pretty often to Toussaint and Gerold's — and, you know what men are, he soon took to following at my heels. — It cannot be helped, my dear, I am a pretty girl and there's an end of it. Well, the long and the short of it was that Pröhle found it out. In less than no time he picked a quarrel with this gentleman, and once when they happened to come across each other, he took him by the collar and almost shook the breath out of him. This gentleman, you see, knows Von Düren, and he went and told tales — and you know what came of it. This is the real cause of his being turned off, and I feel that if Pröhle is hard up we ought to keep an eye on him for a little while to come. After all he has come to grief through me and what I always liked in Pröhle was his — his free and easy way, his making himself so much at home. . . ."

"It would have been better that it should never have happened," said Emma. "A young girl so soon gets talked of. . . ."

"There you go again! — of course, if I could always sit quietly at home. — However, let that be. What do you think of my notion? Pröhle is a very respectable man and, so to speak, a friend of the family. . . ."

"I cannot suggest it to mother, you had better mention it yourself. You know how hard it is to live. Why don't you share your superfluous cash equally between Heinzius and Pröhle?"

"There is a little difficulty about that. You do not seem to be aware that Pröhle and I are not on the best terms. Sooner than take anything from me . . . But it is really terrible to see the man so shaky . . . Thank Heaven!"

This last exclamation hailed the appearance of her aunt, carrying the soup-tureen and followed by Martha Voss whose face, somewhat reddened by the cold, wore a look of quiet satisfaction. She had applied for employment to Toussaint and Gerold and was engaged by them from the first of February.

Adele went to call the poet and the musical type-founder. The party was complete with the exception of Heinzius.

For the first time Pröhle found himself once more by Adele's side. She asked him, half sympathetically and half in jest, about the action for

assault which was to be brought against him; he shrugged his shoulders and by asking another question turned the subject. But Adele persisted, and at length succeeded in extracting a fragmentary account of the situation in spite of her adorer's reserve. After sending Arthur, as the leader of his antagonists, two written challenges to "fight it out," which it was evident could lead to nothing, as they were full of such words as "unblushing insolence," "flagrant behavior," "gross insults," and so forth, the type-founder, by the assistance of his fellow-lodger Lund, had composed a third effusion which was free from abuse and kept to the main point. He explained to the counter-jumper that a blow on the back of the head with a tumbler was at least equivalent to a blow in the face; that the decision of the judge would not be influenced by the opinions of the policeman; and that unless Master Arthur was prepared to pay one hundred marks in return for his black eye and at the same time to withdraw his charge, he, Fritz Pröhle should lodge a counter-charge, in which case the issue might be less favorable. This letter had been posted at twelve on Saturday; he was still expecting the answer.

"Well, and you?" said Adele turning to Roderich. "You must have been going through a

private rehearsal of the third act of your tragedy, or had a quarrel with your unoffending furniture. There was a row in your room like Sodom and Gomorrha!"

"You may laugh!" said Roderich, pushing his fingers furiously through his thick mane of hair. "There is a curse on the house, I tell you. All my hopes are blown to the winds. Herr Pröhle may have to wait for his answer, but mine has come quickly enough, and a precious specimen it is! The manager of the theatre dares to write me this letter:"

He pulled a crumpled note out of his pocket and read it aloud, as follows:

"'Respected Sir!'—the rascal writes respected when he gives me the grossest insults to swallow — 'I am under the painful necessity of declining to accept your tragedy: 'Gracchus.' The tendency of the piece — though I fully recognize its other merits — is not to be reconciled with the manifold responsibilities of my position, with regard to the agitation now rife among the revolutionary party. If I may be allowed to offer you a word of advice, under the circumstances you will reconsider the tragedy, and so far alter the development that the plebeians, whom you glorify, may be somewhat

toned down and finally discomfited. It would be as well perhaps to transform the whole piece into a domestic drama, which could easily be done by bringing the two pairs of lovers into greater prominence and so leading up to a happy ending. I am quite sure that by directing your attention to these points you might produce a capital stock piece. I have the honor to remain,

"'Leuthold, (Manager of the Stadt Theatre.)'"

"He is quite right!" exclaimed Adele as Lund put the letter back in his pocket. "It is much nicer when a piece ends well. And as to all this revolutionary talk and this upsetting of everything — we all know what that leads to!"

"Fräulein Jakoby," said Roderich, "will you take 'Gracchus' in hand and remodel it?"

"Now he is vexed!" said Adele turning to Emma.

"Not I," said the poet. "I know you of old.— But that this man, this Leuthold, should dare to break his word in such a mean way! — I could box his ears with the manuscript till he was deaf and blind!"

"For pity's sake, remember Pröhle! You men are all alike. However, you may be right; after the thing was as good as settled . . . ."

"Yes, and you have had some money on account already," said Fritz Pröhle. "Does he say nothing about that? Will you be allowed to keep that do you suppose?"

"That was a trick. No, he does not say a word about it. Only at the bottom as a pleasant postscript: 'Oblige by sending for the manuscript to my office at your earliest convenience.' It is maddening! And to think that this evening that trashy 'Sophonisba,' by his highness Kurt Ewald, is to be performed for the third time! Ah, my dear Pröhle, you are much to be envied; you cast your A, B, C . . . ."

"When I am in work," said the type-founder.

"Oh! you will soon find work again.— And when you have done it, there's an end of the matter, while I who put the letters of the alphabet together to express ideas am only at the beginning of my cares when the ink is dry."

Martha Voss looked at him with wide eyes.

"I had fancied it was not so," she said gently. "The pleasure a poet must feel in writing would outweigh all vexations — I should have thought, and whether a play is acted or not can make no difference to that satisfaction."

Lund looked gravely in the girl's face. She spoke with perfect simplicity, and yet with such

grave philosophy that he felt abashed by her judgment.

"True," he said at last, "I will grant that fame, applause, and influence over my contemporaries should count for nothing. But what am I to do if the best work I can produce yields me no return? Sublime ideas and grand scenes are not current coin."

"Very true, to be sure," said Martha coloring.

The meal was over before Karl Theodor Heinzius came in, quite breathless, from a three hours' walk. He had applied for six or seven engagements: as pianoforte teacher at thirty-five pfennigs a lesson — as a "well-educated young man perfectly conversant with the French language as a correspondent" — at last as "a gentleman of superior connections and prepossessing appearance" to read for a few hours every evening to an old lady and to play whist and ombre — but everywhere without success. A pianoforte teacher had already offered himself, as a French correspondent his bad accent had stood in his light; the old lady had said with annihilating coolness: — "If it were not for yourself that you were applying . . ." thus giving him to understand that she was not attracted by his appearance and did not recognize in his demeanor any

pretensions to superior connections. It was the same wherever he went; only three openings now seemed to offer themselves: to engage himself as assistant to an under master who had failed to find promotion; to fill an ill-paid place in a Home for female idiots; or thirdly, to answer an advertisement of "Certain profits to be earned in spare time by educated gentlemen. Apply at No. 12 Antoinettenstrasse." He thought that, at the worst, he might make both ends meet with the profits an ordinary man could earn in his spare time.

He hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls; then he began to speak of Otto, almost apologizing for spending his time in running about the town on his own business when his dear and faithful friend was lying in prison; he accepted Emma's consolatory replies with a sigh, and then again took his leave to try first for the "Certain profits" as the street advertised was in the immediate neighborhood.

The rest of the little party sat together a short while longer. Then Pröhle put on his old-fashioned greasy overcoat and attended Miss Adele to the Christmas fair in the Corn market, to purchase the little fir-tree. Frau Lersner withdrew to her own room to rest, for she had sat up late at work the previous night.

Emma sat for another half hour in the parlor with Lund and Martha, listening with secret qualms as Roderich, too, discussed Otto's situation; and then, suddenly overcome by her feelings, went away into the next room. In spite of her firm conviction that justice must be done, in spite of her steadfast belief in the man she loved, her self-possession and cheerfulness were only assumed, and kept up with difficulty. It was too hard, too much for her aching soul; a woman's heart can endure suffering with cheerful fortitude if she knows that the man she loves, loves her; but Emma had not this heavenly certainty to bear her up. She knew, indeed, that Otto had never had any idea of her passionate devotion, her silent adoration, her craving to sacrifice herself for his sake.

This thought made her unutterably wretched. She sank on her knees by her bed quite broken; hid her face in the pillow and wrung her hands in the anguish of despair. Presently, worn out by the struggle, she fell asleep and her dreams were perhaps brighter than the reality, for her bosom rose and fell more calmly and as she turned her head there was a smile on her parted lips though the tears were not yet dry on her cheeks.

CHAPTER XI.

LUCINDA was convalescent; the violence of the fever had yielded to treatment and she had not been delirious for some days. She still needed the greatest care; the least excitement might throw her back, and her husband took every precaution against the events of the last ten days being even alluded to in her presence. The only thing she had been told on recovering her wits was that her father's wound was healing slowly but steadily. Everything else — every suggestion as to the incidents connected with it — all reports as to the law proceedings in the case and the identity of the criminal, were carefully withheld from her knowledge. Her nurse was strictly enjoined to allow no one to see her, not even Camilla.

It was about four in the afternoon and Lucinda was sleeping soundly. Her husband came up to her bedside, looked with a happy smile at her pale but calm and restful face, and then went away on tiptoe, into his dressing-room.

He had two visits of business to pay: first to Otto; and then to his father-in-law's house to

learn the substance of his deposition, which was to be taken this afternoon.

He had matters of importance to discuss with Otto; still, as the holidays were at hand there was no pressing hurry. What really prompted him to go in the dusk of this Christmas-eve was a kindly impulse of human sympathy. He knew how deeply rooted in every soul are the traditions of childhood; how the lonely are twice as forlorn and sorrowful when the memories of the past rise before them — and memory is never so busy as at a time when it whispers: "to-day all who love and are beloved are met by the blazing hearth. . ."

It was dark by the time he mounted the steps of the House of Detention. Otto was unusually cheerful. He had fought a brave fight with Fate and misfortune, and had succeeded in turning his thoughts into a channel as far as possible removed from the present misery. Doctor Lehrbach, with all the tact of a tender-hearted man avoided the tone of compassionate sympathy which is not balm but vitriol to hidden grief. He began to talk with grave indifference of Otto's present occupations, and the books he had been allowed to have; and asked whether his young friend wished for anything further.

Otto wrung his indefatigable protector's hand

with affectionate gratitude. Then he told him how he had spent his day — how he had defied his rebellious thoughts, had forced himself to study the Odyssey and at last had found relief in its vivid pictures of imperishable, sun-lit scenes; — and he showed the lawyer a pencil sketch he had made of Odysseus waking on the sea-shore of Ithaca.

"But, my son," said Lehrbach, holding the sketch close to the lamp, "is it possible that the artistic faculty should develop without practice? This slight outline is infinitely superior to anything that your friend Heinzius has shown me. It is full of purpose — it is vivid, actual, living! You remind me of the Italian writer who said that it was sorrow that had made him a poet."

He laid down the drawing and sat down on the only chair while Otto leaned against the bedstead.

"Well, it is of no use — we must come to business," said the lawyer. "I have thought of nothing else but where to find a fulcrum for my lever so as to dislocate the error in which Justice persists. My thoughts inevitably work round to the same point: the reason for your presence in the library. I feel — I am certain — that on that point you have not told me the whole truth.

Some psychologists, looking at only one side of a question, infer from a partial suppression of the truth that the whole of a statement must be *à priori* untrustworthy. This is obviously an error of judgment. An accused person may have the best and worthiest reasons for lending this or that detail in his statement an aspect which may be palpably detrimental to his own interests. But, often as this can be proved to have happened, the zeal of an examiner leads him to take that one-sided view . . . in fact, it is inherent in the nature of his work. He is bound to be sceptical of every evidence in favor of your innocence. I, on the other hand, in virtue of my position as your advocate, am no less sceptical of the proofs of your guilt. — For instance, I have carefully taxed my own memory, and tested the results, for any concurrent fact, and I believe I have the right clue. I can follow it up without your aid; at the same time it would be simpler and clearer if you would tell me without reserve — I, if I am to defend you successfully, must be allowed to see into the deepest recesses of your heart."

Otto clutched convulsively the head of his bedstead and he turned as pale as death. He wanted to speak, but only an inarticulate sound came from his laboring breast.

"Your agitation," Lehrbach went on, "confirms my suspicions almost to certainty. Answer just a few questions, I earnestly beg. . . ."

"Impossible," Otto brought out.

"I have already told you that I can ascertain the facts without your confessing them. So tell me. . . ."

"Impossible," gasped Otto desperately.

He hardly knew what had come over him; there was something mysteriously terrifying in the penetrating gaze that was fixed upon him, and the strange, almost fiendish calmness of its scrutiny.

"Well then," said the lawyer, "I will tell you exactly what happened. If I am wrong you may contradict me.—It is for a woman's sake that you will not speak. You respect the secret and the honor of a poor weak soul who, for your sake, had outraged her wifely duty. You are bent on sparing her — either because you love her, or out of a chivalrous magnanimity. It sounds well, no doubt, but examined by daylight it is simply quixotic. Do you not see yourself that the woman in question has lost every claim on your generosity? I am not going to give you a sermon on commonplace morality; I have no wish to dwell on her sin and disgrace — for which perhaps there are excuses. But that she should look

on while the man she loves is carried off to prison, that she should not at once, and of her own free-will, speak in order to save you — that is a far greater crime than faithlessness to her husband. It is a base and foul callousness which deserves no mercy, no consideration!"

Otto could hardly breathe. He did not understand — he thought he was bereft of his senses.

"Aye, my friend," the lawyer went on, "you see, your counsel has succeeded in putting two and two together. I have collated the symptoms. Even at Oberhorchheim I saw that she was startled by the appearance of the interesting stranger . . . Then her singular interest in every thing that concerned the new sub-editor, her constant visits at our house where she might hope to meet you. . . ."

Otto rose — slowly, cautiously, as though he feared that any rapid movement might betray his infinite relief. This was like a reprieve at the very foot of the scaffold. His noble-hearted friend had no thought of Lucinda. The one consuming passion of his client's soul had escaped his prophetic glance. How could it be? — The question, which he had so often asked himself before, flashed more vividly than ever across the young man's brain.

Was it that the eye which read most secrets so clearly was fixed on the distance, and had overlooked this one because it lay so close? Or had this generous soul too high and pure an idea of Lucinda; was he too sure of possessing her heart to allow his pride to harbor even the shadow of mistrust? — It must be this; it was the only way of accounting for the blindness of a man who saw through everything else that came within his ken.

Otto stood as motionless as a statue, listening to all his friend said. He knew now to whom Lehrbach alluded: it was the unhappy Anna, the pale victim whose sad history Lehrbach himself had hinted to him.

Otto had in fact felt a certain interest in the poor, crushed woman; but never, for an instant, had it occurred to him — as Lehrbach told him— that the miserable, forlorn creature had looked at him with unuttered passion, that in the crowd of the ball-room she had contrived to keep near him, that she had taken every opportunity of talking about him. A long catalogue of trivial incidents— some of which Otto himself now remembered — contributed to swell the evidence, and the edifice was crowned by the vehement despair with which Frau Föhrenstedt had, so to speak, writhed in the

dust when Otto was taken in charge — a depth of anguish due, in Lehrbach's opinion, not merely to the demolition of her rosy hopes, but to the prospect of her infidelity being discovered.

In short out of these straws Lehrbach had built a consistent whole.

"The thing is as clear as day," he said with conviction. "You returned the silly woman's affection — or perhaps only felt flattered at having achieved a conquest. — So the thoughtless couple agreed to meet in the evening, in the deserted library; Frau Föhrenstedt took the precaution of leaving the room first, that she might not be seen in the corridor in the young gentleman's company. In the agitation of a tender interview the elegant arrangement of his hair had been disordered, or perhaps he himself tumbled and tore it, because the fair one gave vent to some suspicions that piqued his feelings or his pride! — Then the facts occurred as you have stated them. Von Düren entered the room and a third person stabbed him. Now deny this if you can!"

For a second Otto was tempted to confirm his friend in his mistake; but he saw at once that nothing could be more dishonorable than to let the blame rest on an innocent person. Nay, for that matter, it would not even serve its purpose.

So, controlling his pulses as best he might, he simply adhered to his original denial.

"Very well," said the lawyer, "I will admit that my perspicacity may be at fault. But it comes to this: Without that I can name a whole list of witnesses who can give evidence as to your state of mind immediately before the catastrophe, and at the head of them Frau Föhrenstedt herself. . . ."

"As you choose. . . ."

"You are a stiff-necked fellow," said Lehrbach rising and out of patience. "All the same, your determination impresses me! Farewell — but stay. One thing more. I heard yesterday from Baumann, my man, that Fanny, the Von Düren's maid, had entirely disappeared; and the odd thing is that she went on the very day of our misfortunes. She asked leave to go home; finding she did not return her mistress wrote, and yesterday an answer came from her people to say she had not been there at all."

Otto remembered the interview in the palm house. "She has done it then," he said to himself; but it never occurred to him that the incident could have any bearing on his fate.

"Now the coincidence struck me," Lehrbach went on. "I intend to make further enquiries. A

man who has often had to work up such a case as this acquires a keen sensitiveness to mysterious coincidences . . . You see, my friend, we are like soldiers exposed to the enemy's fire on a wide, open plain. We must seek shelter behind the smallest hillock, behind every tuft of grass. Well, keep up your pluck, and give your mind to the tale of the Heroes. — I confidently hope all will come right yet."

CHAPTER XII.

After leaving Otto the lawyer was driven at top speed to Von Düren's residence; it was later than he had intended. In the drawing-room he found Frau von Düren, Herr von Tyllichau, and a large party of relations. Camilla was sitting with her father.

Doctor Lehrbach could not fail to perceive a singular reserve of manner on the part of his mother-in-law and Von Tyllichau. Until the day before he had succeeded, to a certain extent, in justifying his attitude as counsel for the defence on Otto's behalf, in the eyes of the Von Dürens. Camilla, particularly, had succumbed to her brother-in-law's personal influence, and boldly

combated the view taken by the general public; and her mother, though she could not approve of his attitude, had, with her usual passive patience, refrained from any expression of opinion. But to-day there was a hostile breath in the air, very perceptible to Lehrbach, and when he briefly expressed a wish to be allowed to speak with the patient, Frau von Düren said with a sigh that it would be better that he should defer it till another time.

"Why? I hope he is not seriously worse."

"No, thank God! but nevertheless I must beg you . . . . It would excite him too much."

Lehrbach was aware that something lay below this, and not feeling inclined to take a half-explanation he asked, in so many words, what was the meaning of this distant and repellent demeanor.

"Mon Dieu!" Eric von Tyllichau began: "The thing is altogether too unpleasant. The long and the short of it is that my dear father-in-law's deposition has proved to a demonstration — even to the most prejudiced sceptic — that Otto Wellner is the criminal. My dear father-in-law was quite distracted when he heard that you . . . . He could not believe that his Lucinda's husband could have consented to become counsel for the

defence; — he was both indignant and grieved, and any meeting must absolutely be avoided for the present."

Doctor Lehrbach fixed his piercing gaze on the young gentleman, whose speech was approved by the significant nods from the bystanders; it was in icy tones that he went on to ask more exactly what Von Düren had actually said.

"A simple statement of fact," replied Tyllichau playing with his watch chain. "My dear father-in-law went into the room and straight up to the iron safe, with the candle in his left hand. Then, suddenly, just as he was taking the bunch of keys out of his pocket, he saw in the shadow, on the left, a figure. He instantly dropped the light and the keys, seized the man and was stabbed with the knife. The murderer was *exactly* like Wellner in height and figure.— Besides, my father-in-law considers Wellner quite capable of executing such a mean revenge."

Lehrbach drew a deep breath; he was well aware of the importance of this testimony. However, he asked quite coolly:

"And is that all?"

"And enough too!" sighed Frau von Düren.

"That is as may be. Herr von Düren, it would seem, did not recognize the features of this

individual, since he was standing in the shadow of the cabinet. Mere resemblance of stature is too vague for an identification. The deponent knew, no doubt, on whom the suspicion of his family and the public rested?"

"Certainly," said Tyllichau. "My mother told him the day before yesterday that the murderer had been taken almost red-handed, and at once placed in confinement. We owed it to him to give him that much satisfaction; indeed, we thought it would have a favorable effect on his spirits and promote his recovery."

Doctor Lehrbach stood still, nodding meditatively. Then he drew himself up and said, turning first to Eric and then to his mother-in-law:

"I shall not for the present attempt to discuss the subject with Herr von Düren — who is my dear father-in-law, too, respected Brother-in-law. But I can tell you — and you, too, my very dear mother — that I firmly hope that my efforts may result in setting Otto Wellner's innocence in the clearest light, in spite of every obstacle. Appearances are against him — but what is to become of a man laboring under a false accusation if his natural protector is to give him up to his hapless doom. Yes, Herr von Tyllichau — for I am his natural protector, his natural counsel and

defence, since I am the only advocate in the city who knows him personally and intimately; I alone am capable of judging how much of this foolish charge is diametrically opposed to the possibilities of the man's nature. I alone felt kindly — feel kindly — towards him, and I alone am likely to supplement my best powers and experience as a lawyer by the strength of an unwearied and unfailing regard. I consider my connection with this house as affording me a valuable basis: it must be to every one an ample assurance that I, at any rate, am convinced of the truth of my cause; and that is an immense advantage.— But even if I now were to doubt, if I were now compelled to admit to myself that recently discovered facts made his guilt seem probable — even then, as his counsel, I should no longer have the right to withdraw after having once undertaken the case, for I might be in error. As his counsel it is my duty, even if my conviction should be shaken, to collect and conscientiously sift out everything that may tell in his favor. I do not defend the deed if it can be proved against him, but I will do my utmost to prevent his being judged more guilty than he is. From either point of view I shall be doing my part. Until you are convinced of this truth I do not propose

to be seen any more in this house. I leave you, my dear mother, without any feeling of rancor, simply to spare your feelings, and those of your more sensitive son-in-law.— Good-bye."

"Good Heavens!" murmured Frau von Düren. She moved forward as if to detain him, and even Von Tyllichau tried to say something civil; but Lehrbach calmly and deliberately left the room.

"This, to crown all!" sighed the poor woman hiding her face in her handkerchief.

"Pray compose yourself, dear Mamma," said Tyllichau soothingly. "I will go after him, I will explain to him . . . He will surely listen to reason."

"You are so kind, dear Eric," sobbed Frau von Düren. "Indeed, I can only apologize that at the very beginning . . . ."

"But of course," said Tyllichau, "it is quite natural; a mother must hesitate and consider before she parts with her best treasure, her daughter.— And my own conduct has perhaps often been frivolous, heedless. But now, I hope you have no doubts as to my steadfast devotion.— Camilla! Merciful Heaven! when I consider . . ."

Frau von Düren gave him her hand in token of full appreciation. Eric, shaking his head gravely, took up one of the newspapers that lay scattered on the table.

"It is an unfortunate coincidence," he said half to himself. "Paris—Chamber of Deputies—they are squabbling and fighting, those miserable men, as if peace and decency were not a hundred times more important than some trifling question of rights!—Venice, 21st—Ah! we might by this time have been dreaming on the Riva degli Schiavoni, my Camilla and I, if that confounded Socialist.... Well, society is come to a pretty pass altogether. Listen to this: it is really characteristic."

He threw himself back in a rocking-chair and read aloud in a tone of indignation which had its source perhaps in the picture of the Riva degli Schiavoni:

"The advocates of revolution are by degrees revealing themselves in their true light. Only a short while since a mob-demonstration, at the door of a church, caused a deep sensation in the capital; every day the police gain clearer proofs of the presence in our midst of murderous and seditious conspiracies; a criminal attempt on the life of one of our most respected citizens shows, only too plainly, that the ruthless villains are in earnest, and now perfidy is beginning to prey on its own brood. We learn on trustworthy authority that Leopold Meynert, the notorious

agitator and demagogue, vanished some few days since with the funds of the Association, and in the society of a young person of the *demi-monde*. This treason in the camp has thrown the revolutionary party into a state of panic. Their first idea was to keep this unfortunate detail a profound secret; but a few of these fanatics have brought the matter under cognizance of the law — which, with all its crimes, is good enough it would seem, to be appealed to by the sufferers — and for the last two days the telegraph has been brought into play. The fugitives, so far, have been traced no further than a hotel in the town. As soon as fresh information comes to hand it will be made public to our readers."

Tyllichau dropped the sheet on to his knee.

"And Wellner is just such another," he said emphatically. "And my worthy brother-in-law can really believe . . .! Upon my soul, I cannot understand him!"

He took the paper up.

"Dreadful times!" he exclaimed tossing his head. "Really all morality is crumbling into dust. But here is something to comfort us in the midst of so much wickedness: 'The Mutual Aid Society of Gernsheim has elected Baroness Eleonora von Sunthelm–Hiddensöe an honorary mem-

ber of their body in grateful recognition of her efforts for the benefit of humanity, and have presented her with their diploma."

"She is honorary member of at least twenty societies already," said Frau von Düren.

Tyllichau was not quite sure whether this remark was intended to convey approval or irony; so he suppressed the enthusiastic praise he had on the tip of his tongue for the foundress of the new Magdalen charity, and once more glanced down the columns of the newspaper. Suddenly he started.

"I ought to have read this before Doctor Lehrbach called," he exclaimed, eagerly pointing to the paper; when all were listening he read as follows, emphasizing every syllable: "The enquiry as to the murderer of Herr Commissionsrath von Düren has to-day advanced a stage. Our correspondent G writes: 'I have just come from the Racing Club, where I met one of the best-known members of the aristocratic circle: Baron A. von S . . . He informed me that, by accident, he had just become possessed of an important detail of evidence against Wellner, and had already communicated the discovery to Herr Seeborn, who is conducting the case for the prosecution. The evidence rests on the identification of the knife

used by the assassin. A young and enterprising agent named P., who has lately settled in Berlin and has been entrusted with various business by Baron von S., was discussing the atrocious business with the baron — whose affability to his inferiors is proverbial. When Baron von S. described the weapon with which the deed was accomplished, Herr P. seemed startled. Our readers will remember no doubt that the handle of this knife represents a headless eagle with a thunderbolt in its talons. An appropriate emblem, truly, for the Socialist's instrument of murder! In short it happily came to light that Herr P. had actually seen this knife in Wellner's possession, on the occasion of a fray that took place on the stairs of a lodging-house, No. 70, Sandgasse. The agent, it seems, had some time ago had words with Wellner, who ever since has owed him a grudge. P. having occasion to go to this house on business, came across his old enemy, who instantly seized him by the throat and tried to throttle him; in the heat of the struggle the knife slipped out of Wellner's pocket and fell on the straw mat. Wellner made off and P. picked up the knife. Wellner, however, at once discovered the loss of this murderous weapon; he returned, and furiously insisted on his property being restored to him; and as he

put it back in his pocket he said: 'That would do an insolent fellow like you more good than a thrashing!' The agent is quite ready to swear to this statement. — The last doubts, which the distinguished counsel for the defence seems so eager to cling to, must surely vanish once for all under this fresh evidence. The public prosecutor it is said will require P. — whose name will be divulged in due time—to repeat and swear to his deposition immediately after the Christmas vacation.' "

In their excitement Tyllichau's audience had all risen from their seats; all wanted to see with their own eyes the all-important paragraph and revive the exciting impressions that Eric's dramatic style had produced.

While this new, and apparently irresistible blow was preparing for him, Otto Wellner, the victim of this elaborate and cruel malice, sat gravely thoughtful by his prison lamp. The quarters struck in dull succession from the tower of St. Matthew's church. At seven o'clock the chimes tolled out a mournfully pious chorale. Otto rested his head on his hand, feeling miserably forlorn in spite of his bravest efforts. Not a star shone in his sky, not a ray of hope — not a soul perhaps,

excepting Lehrbach, cared for his trouble. — And it was Christmas eve!

The key turned in the lock; the warder, carrying a lantern in his left hand, came slowly into the room.

"Here is something for you," he said in a growling whisper. "I ought not to bring it, but my wife gave me no peace. — The young woman herself brought it. She did not say who it was from; I was just to give it to you. There cannot be much in it, it is so small and light; no tool or weapon, or anything of that kind. — Here you are; but when the inspector comes round mind you hide it under the bed." And in his right hand, which he had kept behind his back, he held out a small parcel pinned up in tissue paper. Then he stumped out again.

Otto took out the pins. The paper contained a full-blown rose with a slip of paper tied to the stem. He read as follows:

A CHRISTMAS ROSE.

"This flower, blooming under winter's blight,
Says 'Courage! Hope!' — the Truth must come to light.
Not lonely nor forgotten do you pine,
And after storm and gloom the sun will shine."

The young man sat for a long time gazing, as if wrapt in dreams, at the rose and the delicate

tremulous handwriting. He guessed at once who the writer must be. Suddenly he saw no more. The flower, the note with its kindly rhyme, all were a floating chaos; his eyes were dim with tears. He hid the rose carefully away and threw himself on the hard bed sobbing like a child.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE holidays were over. Doctor Lehrbach had not once been out of his house since Christmas eve. His wife's rapid recovery kept him at home almost as much as his preoccupation over Otto Wellner's defence: to-day, the twenty-eighth of December, she was able to be up almost the whole day.

The lawyer ransacked his library for cases in any way resembling that of his client; he drew up a sort of statistical report of the psychological situation; he reconsidered his hypothesis as to the physician's wife, and what steps he could take on Wellner's behalf so as to fulfil his duty as his advocate without outraging the laws of gentlemanly feeling and good taste.

Then he devoted himself to framing theories as to the real criminal. The idea that a burglary,

an attack on the safe, lay at the bottom of the mystery was self-evident, but of this there was no trace of evidence. The fact that the door was locked by which the miscreant had escaped — as Otto deposed — and that the key was found in a drawer of Von Düren's desk could hardly be regarded as favorable, though to the lawyer, of course, a false key at once suggested itself. To connect Fanny's disappearance with the attack on her master seemed unfounded to say the least. Nevertheless Lehrbach was determined to make a stir about it, and to set the police to work as soon as he could procure the necessary warrants. This much at any rate seemed certain: the criminal must have been thoroughly familiar with the ways of the house. Lehrbach thought of every person who could have been thus well informed, and still his suspicions worked round, again and again, to Fanny and her mysterious disappearance.

He labored at all these issues with indefatigable zeal and perseverance, relieving the cares of this arduous task by petting and nursing the pale convalescent, who, reclining among the cushions of her deep rocking-chair, was the very picture of pathetic resignation and grateful helplessness. Lehrbach once more received callers, and again read the newspapers which, so far as politics were

concerned, had stagnated during Christmas week. The officious Baumann, at first had constantly plagued his master with ingenious questions and judicial suggestions, but he and the rest of the servants had been strictly forbidden even to mention the matter, for Lehrbach found the vulgar and often absurd gossip that was rife in the town, positively sickening. Thus it happened that the sensational paragraph as to the identification of the knife escaped his notice, and he looked forward with calm conviction to the further development of the case, which he felt certain must be cleared up in spite of every complication.

If he could have suspected all that was going on in the examining judge's private office, where Ephraim Peltzer, "the intelligent young agent" was sworn by Herr Seeborn, and then, with an effrontery which commanded belief, deposed to any number of lies; and, when subsequently confronted with the prisoner, stuck to his statements till Otto, aghast and furious at his adversary's turpitude, lost all self-command — if he had known all this, even Lehrbach, in spite of his settled confidence, must have lost heart.

But the worthy lawyer, never dreaming of this disastrous state of things, was sitting at about four in the afternoon by Lucinda's side, smiling in

her face and endeavoring to evade her pressing enquiries into the details of the catastrophe, the progress of the case, and the identification of the criminal. He held her thin white hand in his and looked with anxious tenderness into the large restless eyes which were almost more eloquently eager than her questions.

"Do not think about it, my child," he said. "You have heard the only important fact: Your father is quite out of danger. Anything more will only excite you, and you still need quiet and care."

"Indeed, Oswald, you are quite mistaken," she said, returning the pressure of his hand. "It will not hurt me to hear what I want to know—it is ignorance and suspense that worry me. All the time I was ill perhaps you were wise to tell me nothing; but now I really am quite strong again, and I have a right to know how and why this dreadful deed was done—who can have dared to raise his hand against the noblest and truest heart—whether the wretch got away or not—in short the whole story. Just now, when you thought I was asleep, I had only shut my eyes to follow up the wild fancies that rush through my head; I racked my brain to guess what you could tell me in a few words."

She spoke so calmly though urgently, and her reasons were in fact so obvious, that her husband was forced to give way. He only begged her to control her feelings and not to allow the attack on her father to work too vividly on her imagination. Then he gave a short account of the circumstances so far as they were known from the historical point of view, without any hint or suggestion as to who the criminal might be. Lucinda listened in silence, and did not move a feature; his warning had had a good effect.

"But now," he went on, "comes a part of the story which will no doubt startle and perhaps agitate you more than the details of the crime. I, I may confess to you, was shocked beyond expression when it came to my knowledge on the very night of the deed. A friend of our own has been charged with the crime, and is in prison — a man for whom — as I may frankly confess — I felt the warmest regard from the hour when I first saw him: Otto Wellner — an amiable, talented young man . . . It is a mistake, of course, a horrible misapprehension . . . But Lucinda, my child, what is the matter? For God's sake! — I knew how it would be!"

Every shade of color had died out of his young wife's face. Her pretty head, which from

time to time, in the course of Lehrbach's narrative, she had raised in her excitement, drooped lifeless on the pillow and her white lips trembled and quivered. Her hands lay limp in her lap. Doctor Lehrbach ran into the next room to fetch some water with which he sprinkled her forehead and cheeks, speaking fond words of encouragement. He was about to ring the bell and send a servant for the doctor, but as he reached the door he heard her say with a sigh: "Stop." He turned round; she was sitting up and drying her face with her handkerchief.

"Give me some water to drink," she said.

"My child, my darling!" murmured Lehrbach holding the glass to her lips. "How you frightened me! You see, I told you so — you are still far too weak and I cannot forgive myself . . . ."

"No, no," said she, and her voice was firm again, "it would have agitated me quite as much if I had been perfectly well. Otto Wellner? But it is horrible, Oswald! I do not believe it. It is simply impossible!"

"Well, we will not discuss it now. When you are quite well again . . . ."

A faint flush tinged her face.

"I promise solemnly not to be upset any more," she whispered. "Now that I have once

heard the facts I must know more about it. You yourself, you say, believe him to be innocent. Tell me . . . ."

"Certainly, I am perfectly convinced of his innocence," replied the lawyer. "But at the same time I must own that various circumstances seem, at first sight, to justify the suspicion . . . But all this will keep; it is quite too much for you now. I can see your face is flushed again. I cannot risk a relapse. It is enough for you to know that Otto Wellner is accused of the crime, and that I, as his friend, have devoted myself from the very first to collecting evidence in his defence."

"You!" cried his wife in a tone of pain. "Good God!"

"What is there to startle you in that?"

Lucinda put her hand to her heart under the shawl that covered her; she struggled with all her might to speak calmly.

"I only feel," she said slowly, "how wonderfully kind and faithful you are — how devoted and true!"

"I do not see it. Do you think it so very wonderful that I should take the part of a friend who is attacked by the whole world, as a wild

beast is beset by the hounds? I am only doing my duty in my profession, and I can but hope to be as successful as I have often been before."

There was a pause. Presently Lucinda spoke again.

"You must tell me everything, now," she said composedly. "The idea that the innocent should suffer for the guilty is one I could never endure. You remember the last case that you brought to a successful issue — how I felt for you and your miserable client, and was unhappy for weeks. And now one of our own friends is going through the same ordeal and you would deny my right . . . ? No, Oswald; — and I assure you it will weigh upon me more to be left in doubt than to know even the very worst . . . . So tell me in so many words, what are the facts that tell against Herr Wellner?"

Doctor Lehrbach saw that he had gone too far to retreat now. He told his wife all he knew, adding all the psychological reflections he had gone through during the last few days. Lucinda turned pale again as she listened.

"Then you do not believe in the pretext of his having gone to look at the moon?" she asked in a dull voice.

"Not for a moment."

"And he persists in it? He gives no other reason?"

"He refuses to offer any other explanation though I have pressed him on every side. But, as you see, I have a clue to work by; I will know the truth one way or another . . . ."

"You shall — and I will tell you!" she exclaimed. Her eyes shone with a strange light and a look of deep trouble clouded her sweet face, though it expressed a firm determination.

"You? why, what can you know about it?" said Lehrbach startled by her expression.

"I will tell you.— Are we quite alone? See that there is no one in the next room — lock the doors pray."

"Lucinda!" exclaimed Lehrbach; but he went into the adjoining rooms and locked the doors. When he returned his wife was standing by her chair.

"My child, you will over-tire yourself!" he said anxiously.

"That does not matter now. I have two duties to fulfil — a confession will suffice for both. Then — what will happen! — Will you hear me?"

Doctor Lehrbach had stopped at the doorway; a horrible pang of anxiety seemed to be

choking him ; he shut his eyes ; a gulf yawned at his feet.

"Oswald," said Lucinda in low tones, "I must tell you something that I know will grieve your soul — I know it, but I cannot help it. I cannot allow a man who is far less guilty than I am to be utterly ruined for my sake.— And I cannot bear to let you — you, a noble, true-hearted man —heap a creature so unworthy as I am with all the treasures of love and devotion. Punish me, Oswald, as much as you think I deserve ; I will submit in all humility. Turn me out of your house ; I have disgraced it . . . ."

Lehrbach staggered as if he were drunk.

"Speak!" he said after a struggle, but he covered his eyes with his hand.

"I . . ." Lucinda began, "it was I who went to meet Otto Wellner in the library. He asked me to meet him — and I agreed."

Doctor Lehrbach had slowly crossed the room to a chair, gazing at the pale figure before him as if he saw a ghost. He sat down, rested his head on his hand and stared into vacancy.

"Go on," he said.

"You will not believe me, I know, when I tell you the rest. You have a right to doubt me, for a wife who has once deceived her husband . . .

However, I will go on; I will tell you everything as it happened."

And she proceeded to relate all the history of her girlhood, the loneliness of a soul that had never known love, the passion she had suddenly felt for Otto, the moment of mad self-abandonment when she had laid her head on his shoulder, dreaming that she had found in him that which her heart had vainly longed for—then again she spoke of her sudden revulsion to remorse, her firm resistance to Otto's further advances, her agony of mind and overwhelming shame and horror . . . .

"Now you know everything; except one thing—but I will tell you that, too, for it is your triumph over my wickedness, and will show you plainly how bitterly I repent and how complete your revenge will be if I have to leave your home. From that mad hour, Oswald, I have felt that it was a fit of insanity.— The love and kindness you have shown me, the worth and dignity that have been mine as your wife, I suddenly discovered to be precious beyond all words. Never till now have I duly felt all the depth of your nature, the loftiness of your character—now, now I know what your love was to me. To lose it—to be despised and driven out by you, whom I have

learnt to worship—your wounded pride could invent no more cruel punishment."

She paused, quite exhausted. Her husband sat still with that fixed gaze.

At length he rose.

"And that is the whole truth?" he said hoarsely.

"The whole truth—as surely as I trust in God to have mercy on me."

He went to the window, and for at least ten minutes he stood with his forehead pressed against the ice-cold pane. Then he turned sadly to his trembling wife.

"Go to your room," he said. "I will call up the nurse and then I must go out."

"What to do?" she asked in terror.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"For the present I cannot decide. You are still ill, and this scene will have done you harm."

"Oswald," she said shivering, "I entreat you...! the worst reproaches, the most cruel abuse would be less hard to bear than this awful coldness. It argues the worst!"

"Do not alarm yourself. I am past the age at which a man acts on the impulse of the moment. If I had yielded to that, if I were the sport of my passions—by God! I should have

strangled you at the first word." His voice was terrible; Lucinda shrank.

"Do it, do it!" she suddenly exclaimed throwing herself at his feet. "Crush me, kill me — but say you forgive me!"

Her hair fell loose about her neck, her breast heaved and her slim form writhed convulsively.

"Stand up," said Lehrbach more gently; "go and lie down and try to control yourself. You have hurt me, Lucinda — you cannot dream how deeply.— But greater than that pain is the shame, the misery of the thought that all this must be displayed to the eyes of the world."

Lucinda sprang wildly to her feet:

"No, no," she cried clinging to her husband in despair. "That shall never, never be. Sooner than confess it I will kill myself. It was false pity for that man that prompted me. His oath binds him; he has not spoken — he will not speak. I — oh! your honor and peace are more important in my eyes than the happiness of a stranger, than his life, than justice itself! Oswald, my thoughts are in a whirl — I feel so strangely — Oswald, Oswald!"

"Poor foolish child!" sighed Lehrbach as she sank senseless in his arms. He laid her on the

sofa and rang the bell. The nurse and a maid carried her into her bedroom.

"Oswald!" cried Lucinda once more as her husband was about to leave the house. It was a pathetic, heart-rending cry. Lehrbach hesitated. Then, hastily making up his mind, he went into her room and sent away the women. Lucinda beckoned him to her side; she lay with her eyes half shut on her white lace-frilled pillows. She took his hand.

"Tell me what you are going to do," she implored him in an anxious whisper. "You are going to him . . . . you will tell him . . . ."

"Are you so anxious about him?" said Lehrbach bitterly.

"Oh no, not for him . . . ."

Lehrbach shook his head gravely.

"You must keep quiet, Lucinda," he said firmly. "Yes — I am going to him — but that I had settled to do yesterday."

"I do not understand."

"You are too ill, Lucinda — and he is in prison. This is not the time to call you both to account. When it is all over — when you are well and he is free — then I will speak of this again."

"Then you will go on . . . . ?"

"Yes. My feelings — I will confess it — say: Withdraw your helping hand from an ungrateful wretch who has dared to plot against your honor. But then another impulse stirs in me, and that other is the better. The miserable man is in a desperate plight. He is wrecked in mid-ocean, and shall I drag away the board to which he is clinging? It is quite beyond a doubt that the explanation which you can give is amply sufficient to prove his innocence . . . . So for the present — until the overwhelming disgrace deprives me of the power — till the public trial . . . . And even then, perhaps, the deadening of all feeling is the only way of living through it all!"

He was about to go but Lucinda clung to him. She held his hand to her lips and at length burst into tears. Lehrbach turned away; a feeling of tenderness which he felt he ought not to betray was undermining his manly resolution.

"Good-by," he said coldly.

Her trembling fingers released him; she hid her face in the pillow sobbing bitterly. Lehrbach walked steadily to the door; a slight quiver of his chin and set lips alone betrayed what a storm of conflicting feelings stirred within.

Leaning back in his carriage he had leisure to think over the scene that had so shocked and

distressed him. His first impulse was to confront the traitor, to reproach him for his baseness, cowardice and ingratitude; to make him feel that his fate was in the hands of the man he had injured; to humble him as a master crushes his slave; and then to say to him: "In spite of everything I will be your guide and deliverer, as I have been to many a fool and many a criminal for whom I could only feel contemptuous pity."

But then he scorned such a petty triumph. It seemed mean and ignoble to play the part of a boy throwing stones at a lion in a cage. Not till it was all over should Otto Wellner know what righteous wrath could be when it was roused; he would have no struggle with an antagonist whose hands were tied! He was impressed, too, by the iron steadfastness with which Wellner had kept his secret; Lehrbach was unprejudiced enough to do justice to this trait of character. He might hate such an enemy, but he could not trample him in the dust with scorn.

When he had decided on these disinterested grounds to postpone hostilities — even as to manner and speech — a consideration occurred to him which showed that the better and nobler course was also the most advantageous. It was still not quite impossible that he might succeed in clearing

his client of the charge without any reference to this meeting in the library. His heart clung with agonies of hope to this possibility. His own position would be much more dignified if he could but avoid any previous discussion with Otto, and call him to account simply on the real grounds.

Till now Doctor Lehrbach had followed up the evidence for the defence with calm confidence, but now he became a victim to a perfect fever of unrest. The frightful alternative — either of proving the truth by some fresh and happy light, or, if he should fail in that, of proclaiming his own disgrace, bereft him of the deliberation which was so necessary—for he never for an instant dreamed of taking advantage of Otto's honorable silence.

Driven by this demon of unrest he felt that he must at once carry into effect all the plans he had laid for the next few days. He had a friend among the higher police-officials with whom he had several times discussed this case of Otto Wellner, and they had agreed — in opposition to the public voice — as to the reasons for believing in his innocence. He must see this official; he must direct his attention more particularly and immediately to the discovery of the real criminal—a point that had occupied him for many days. The police officer might at once begin the necessary

enquiries; till now Lehrbach had said that the traces of the real murderer would probably be more easy to find in proportion as he felt himself secure against suspicion, and the longer the prosecution of Otto Wellner was allowed to take its course. But now he was tremulous with impatience; he felt that further delay was an intolerable waste of time.

He learnt from his friend the facts which had transpired about half-an-hour before, of Peltzer's deposition and of his being confronted with Wellner; this seemed to place Otto's guilt beyond doubt. The impression they made on Lehrbach was startling; for the first time he asked himself whether after all he could be mistaken. But he dismissed the idea at once. It must be some fresh misconception — or a barefaced lie. He knew now so exactly the frame of mind in which the accused had been lingering on the scene of the crime — a frame of mind as far as earth from heaven from that of a man who is plotting and longing for revenge. At the same time this fresh evidence and identification was almost crushing, and he had to confess to himself that, when weighed against Peltzer's declaration, even Lucinda's confession would be of very doubtful avail.

Otto himself must see this; in the face of this overwhelming identification he must have given up all hope.

As this reflection occurred to him, a deep and tender pity welled up in his soul. Forgetful of his own sufferings he followed the impulse of his humane and feeling heart: the man whom Wellner had repaid with ingratitude and treachery went into the cell of his betrayer and held out his hands with comforting and encouraging words, bidding him still not despair, as kindly and affectionately as a father might.

CHAPTER XIV.

EMMA had heard from Pröhle that the knife had been identified, three days before the events detailed in the last chapter. Terrified at the news she had hurried off to Lehrbach, and had sent in a message of enquiry as to whether anything new had transpired to affect Wellner's position. The man-servant, who knew her and now graciously patronized her, went to ask the lawyer, who came out for an instant, laid his hand on her shoulder and assured her he knew of nothing.

"Thank God!" said the girl, much relieved.

"But Herr Pröhle told me. . . ." Lehrbach interrupted her: she was to believe nothing but what he thought fit to tell her. The only thing that had occurred — the deposition of Von Düren himself — he had written about to Heinzius. So Emma was dismissed without having an opportunity of mentioning the report that had caused her alarm.

Otto Wellner and Peltzer were confronted and examined, as has been said, on the twenty-eighth, and all the world knew the result almost as soon as Lehrbach himself. That same evening it was discussed in every eating-house and tavern, in the drawing-rooms of the rich and the squalid beer shops of the low quarters of the town; for Anastasius von Sunthelm and his accomplice had, as it would seem, an interest in spreading the report as rapidly as possible.

Thus it came to the ears of Pröhle, who was still wandering about without employment. It was strange to see how much he was excited by this restatement of a fact which he had already known some days.

In the course of the past week Fritz Pröhle had become more deeply entangled than ever with the extreme radical party. Provoked to the verge of folly by his own hard case, and worried

by doubts of Adele, he had made friends with a stranger who, like himself, was "high and dry"—and had been for years—and who had come to the point of declaring war with mankind at large.

This individual, after winning Pröhle's confidence and inflaming his fanatical indignation to something like intermittent madness, had given his name as Karl Hackenthal, author, from Nieder Wöllstadt in Rhein-Hessen.

The subsistence which this ignored genius had succeeded in extracting at intervals from editors, had during the last few years become so inconspicuous that Hackenthal had by degrees found it impossible to assert his position as a literary journeyman. The silver coin bestowed on him by the editor of the "Glocke" was the last he had pocketed in this way, and when, on his return to his wretched lodging, he had taken stock of his various chances, he perceived that this path for the future promised nothing but thorns. He came to an abrupt decision. He sold his manuscript of "Flora" to the butterman, and adopted the profession of Cicerone. The unattractive clumsiness of his appearance and manner—Karl Hackenthal had graduated as a small grocer—were very much against him, and ere long he was thankful when fate threw a countryman in his way whom

he could conduct about the town, free of charge if only he could drop in with him to some eating-house and play one of the many games which the gifted swindler finds so lucrative when a bumpkin is his prey. Karl Hackenthal, however, had not the genius to carry on the game with unvarying success; in consequence his hatred of Society — in the sense of those who had perceptible means of living — grew more furious every day. A desperate man, grown much too lazy for hard labor, longs and plots for catastrophes, since, whoever else may be crushed in the ruins, he cannot be worse off.

The nihilistic conspiracy, concerning which the wildest fables were at that time rife, was not a mere maggot in the brains of the police. A number of crazy Catilines had in fact met and plotted to subvert the whole social order, with the aid of the socialist workingmen, whose cöoperation they believed themselves sure of as soon as the word for action was given. Hackenthal was one of this revolutionary committee, and finding in Pröhle — whose temporary frenzy he counted on as a declaration of political belief — as an influential and fearless ally, he agreed with his fellow-rogues to involve him in the plot. This was an easy matter. Fritz Pröhle, who had no glimmer of an idea

of the organization of a state, looked up to Hackenthal as a power, and a gifted creature. He was perfectly convinced that the difficulties and hindrances which Hackenthal alluded to were mere cobwebs which he — Fritz Pröhle — could blow to the four winds.

When Hackenthal revealed the momentous secret Pröhle had just changed his last five mark piece. This of itself was enough to make him feel as if each of his fists were a host in itself, to make him foam with rage at every man who had an unchanged dollar in his pocket, to make him leave the last gleam of common-sense at the bottom of the tankard that he tossed off to Hackenthal's success. But for some days after he felt a slight uneasiness, which increased considerably and returned again and again after Hackenthal had introduced him to the circle of conspirators.

Now, however, when he heard on every side that the statement in the newspapers as to Peltzer's deposition was true — that Otto Wellner's guilt was proved to a demonstration, and that even his counsel no longer doubted it, (so report said)— now the type-founder suddenly felt conscious of his moral superiority. This Wellner, whom he had treated with so much respect, who was so "cute" and had learnt everything that belonged to a real

"education" — even he had had recourse to violence to gain his rights; why then should Fritz Pröhle hesitate to be found arm in arm with Karl Hackenthal, ready to run amuck against the "law as they call it"? Wellner's deed was an act of rebellion: that was as clear as day — and what Wellner could do, he could do! And his brain was so bewildered by these ideas and impressions that he lost not only a wholesome respect for "the law as they call it", but all sense of right, and all faculty of judgment. He never remembered that Otto's fate was irrevocably sealed, and forgot even to feel common human pity for his terrible doom.

It was not till the following morning when he was going to tell Emma Lersner of this crowning disaster that it struck him how much it would shock her. So he qualified his tone of triumphant satisfaction at having cause and justification for avenging his fellow-radical, and only said in a few words that he and the newspaper were right. Emma remembered Lehrbach's warning, and tried to feel indifferent, and regard the whole thing as of no importance; immediately after, however, Heinzius brought the same terrible intelligence from the Asylum for Female Idiots, where he had been enquiring for employment. Both the men

declared that the report could not be unfounded; indeed, Heinzius said that Peltzer's deposition had already been published word for word in the "*Morgenpost.*" His anguish and alarm were only too genuine; and the poor girl's last hope died under the blow. She groaned aloud and hid her face in her hands; all her fortitude and courage were crushed.

Heinzius was too honorable and unselfish a friend to give way to the feelings which the sight of her grief stirred in his soul. The impulse of angry jealousy which surged up for a moment in his throbbing heart vanished before his fears for the life of Wellner.

When Emma again faced Heinzius and Pröhle, though pale, she was calm and collected. She asked Heinzius to counsel her, and after a brief consultation they agreed that the schoolmaster should at once go again to Lehrbach, and hear what he thought of the new turn that affairs had taken. If Peltzer's statement was as fatal as Heinzius believed, Emma would — what would she do? She herself did not know; but she felt that she could have neither peace nor rest so long as any single thing remained undone which, even at the eleventh hour, might avert the final catastrophe.

She awaited his return in hopeless patience. She herself could not have walked to the end of the street. An invincible chill made her tremble in every limb; she sat huddled in a thick shawl which she had thrown over her shoulders but still she shivered; it was an internal shudder, an icy grip on her heart — the tremor that comes over a man as the climax of some long-dreaded disaster looms nearer and nearer.

It was striking twelve when Heinzius returned. He had not found the lawyer at home; he had followed him to two or three places and at last had met him coming out of the police court. Hat in hand, and standing at the door of Lehrbach's elegant carriage, Heinzius had listened to the lawyer's opinion: it was in fact utterly discouraging. Peltzer's deposition — as Lehrbach had learnt from his official friend — was without any flaw that might afford a hold for the defence to shake its credibility. Peltzer had frankly admitted that he and the prisoner, some months since, had had a fray in the wood at Oberhorchheim. This, to be sure, might, with due caution, be taken advantage of to suggest the possibility of a revengeful feeling on Peltzer's part; but, on the other hand, it might no less prove a grudge in Otto's mind, since Peltzer had then on the

whole, had the best of it. There was nothing known against Peltzer personally that should make it seem probable that he would perjure himself. Otto himself admitted that they had met and struggled on the stairs of the lodging house. In short, as matters at present stood, they could only be prepared for the worst, unless some unexpected incident should throw fresh light on the case.

This was the verdict which the schoolmaster, breathless with haste and agitation, repeated in broken sentences. When he ceased they stood for a minute or two gazing at each other. Then Emma said with unnatural coolness:

"Will you call Pröhle and Roderich Lund?"

The type-founder had withdrawn to his own room where he was writing letters. At last Master Arthur had given signs of life. He had written to explain to Herr Pröhle that he would withdraw his charge of assault for the small indemnity of fifteen marks; Pröhle, who had not a notion where to lay his hand on the said fifteen marks, was begging Herr Arthur to come to terms and accept nine. When he had achieved this epistle, Pröhle — who found it far more difficult to compose a letter than to cast type — wrote a similar appeal to Arthur's two allies. Finally,

and with a deep sigh, he made a rough copy of a letter to Dr. Heinrich Salomon, asking for a very modest loan — indignantly anticipating the reply which might very possibly be a refusal.

He was sitting deeply absorbed in this laborious task when the schoolmaster knocked at his door.

By this time Adele and Martha had come home and they entered the sitting-room at the same time as Pröhle. Martha was as pale as marble, and Adele looked unusually grave. At the sight of Emma's face the girls had guessed at once that all hope was lost — and what this meant for the miserable Emma had long been to them an open secret. Though unconfessed, it was not the less certain that to her Otto Wellner — to all the world beside a traitor and a criminal — was the one and only object worth living for.

"Herr Pröhle," she began, "you have heard Dr. Lehrbach's opinion? — Lies and treachery are at work to compass the ruin of one of the best and noblest men living. The law will not let him go. Now I ask you: What can we do to prevent the fatal end?"

Before Pröhle could answer Heinzius came into the room with the dramatic poet. Emma, in a few words told Lund the state of affairs.

"I knew all that, long ago," said Lund frown-

ing fiercely. "The story is in all the papers. All yesterday I racked my brain to think of what could be done; Fräulein Martha be my witness. But what can we do? I cannot bear to think that I, perhaps, was the original cause . . . ."

"No apologies are needed," said Emma. "All I know is that you called him your friend, and that he took your part; he risked his life in your behalf . . . . And you stand there and shrug your shoulders. If you should stake your life, now, you would only be quits!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Roderich, "do you think if I run my head against his prison wall it will knock it down? Show me anything that I can do to save him, but do not accuse me in general terms of foul ingratitude."

"That is just like you!" said Emma scornfully. "You have courage enough to bluster out wild talk, and to rave, and threaten, or to write plays in which the actors stamp and storm; but for anything else . . . ."

Frau Lersner, coming in from the kitchen, interrupted this diatribe. Emma felt that there was nothing to be gained by it, so she made up her mind to control herself for the present. But the thoughts that had begun to work behind that pure smooth brow were terrible and strange.

Frenzied by her misery, which saw no issue on any side, all her patient timidity, her maidenly reserve, her pious horror of everything foreign to modesty and propriety had been swept away. Wrecked to the very foundations of her nature, Emma was in that desperate temper which will lead a man to blow the world to the four winds in a last clutch at happiness. Life, to her, seemed rent and ruined; nothing that she had once cared for had any value now; there was but one thing in the world worth doing, worth living for — the rescue of the man she loved, cost what it might!

It was not an eager sense of justice that had stung her to madness; it was only the one omnipotent motive which, in a woman, excludes or absorbs every other: passionate love.

All she wanted was the means — a tool with which to wrench off Otto's fetters, and she seized the first that came to hand. In the brain of the innocent-looking girl who stood looking at the floor, a simple — almost a childish scheme of open rebellion had taken form with amazing promptitude. She heard not the voice of warning conscience — it was a sudden fixed idea: These men, these rebels, should help her to overthrow everything that stood between her lover and

liberty: the police on guard, the gloomy walls, the state, and society itself — so long as they gained the end in view . . . . ! What could Emma Lersner know of the aims and hopes of the radicals? Nothing whatever, and the little she could guess was bitterly antipathetic to her. But this much she knew: that all the party hated the established order of things, and that their hatred was the weapon she could now pick up. All that was disreputable, repulsive, and criminal in such a deed she was blind to.

They sat down to dinner. In spite of his preoccupation with his growing devotion to Martha Voss, Roderich Lund could think of nothing during the meal but Emma's implied censure and contempt. His thoughts reverted to them again and again.

The whole tone and tendency of his vague rhetoric seemed to Emma proof positive that Roderich was not the man who would help her in this emergency. Pröhle had sat through all his fantastic declamation in total silence, with his brows knit, staring fixedly at his plate, and drumming on the table with his huge fingers as though it were too much for his patience; and Emma, whose nerves were strung to a pitch of extreme sensitiveness, was strangely excited by his odd behavior.

When dinner was over Roderich asked the young girls to come for a short walk outside the city walls. The bright, frosty weather was in fact tempting; but Adele had business to attend to — real business for once — and Emma briefly declined. Roderich had half hoped that she would, and had quite hoped that she might.

He and Martha set out together, down the Sandgasse and out on to the broad snow-decked plain beyond the gates. They wandered slowly on in absent-minded happiness — for, above all the anxieties of the hour, floated the tender secret — unspoken as yet but deeply felt — which bound their souls together: the ecstasy of unconfessed and reciprocated love. Martha, for the first time, poured out the tale of her sad and bitter past: how, after growing up in a peaceful and sheltered home, she had been suddenly thrust out into the merciless world, not knowing where she might lay her head. She honestly blamed herself for having been so spoilt by the tenderness of a too indulgent father, and for having wasted her youthful powers in the pursuit of idle fancies. Helpless, and incapable of keeping herself in a respectable position, her father's death had left her destitute; it was in sheer despair and with an oppressive sense of reaping the fruits of her

own folly, that she had made her way to Gernsheim.

Then Roderich, on his part, spoke of his poetic hopes and schemes — and he did not declaim his griefs with his usual thundering and dramatic vehemence, but murmured them gently, almost resignedly. During the last few days he had sketched a plan of life not altogether in accordance with his former projects. He wondered whether it might not be well to give greater prominence to his qualifications as a teacher—not of course to the hindrance of his creative labors, and to move to a quarter of the town where this profession might prove more lucrative . . . in fact he expressed himself with amazing moderation, and Martha—the grave and melancholy Martha—smiled radiantly as she listened, for she knew that Roderich's plans were all for her.

Heinzius also had gone out after dinner; with a gloomy, almost a truculent, expression on his pale, thin features. He was no longer thinking of the miserably-paid labors of a pianoforte teacher or the "certain profits to be earned in leisure hours"; his head was full of a daring project that had startled the soul of the brooding pedagogue as he sat over his meal. The fierce expression of his face had its counterpart in the knotted stick—

an appurtenance of Fritz Pröhle's — which he swung in his hand as he strode along. In fact he purposed nothing less than to obtain from Anastasius von Sunthelm, Peltzer's address — that Peltzer against whom he had an old score unsettled from Gernsheim: he meant to beard him in his den, to accuse him boldly, to his face, of perjury, and to mark whether this sudden attack did not bewilder and abash the agent, so that he might be forced to confess the crime. And Heinzius had taken up Pröhle's cudgel merely under a vague impression that with that in his hand he might produce a greater effect. He painted to himself a startling scene when he should say: "Wretch! you have perjured yourself!" and drop the head of this mighty bludgeon on the table as a terrific symbol of the irresistible vengeance and wrath of Heaven. As to anything that might come between him and this *coup de main*, it was not worth considering. Peltzer was the only tangible and attainable object within his ken — and our worthy schoolmaster felt that he must attack and worry some one, or the grief that stuck in his throat would be the death of him.

Thus, while the rest of the party were gone on their peaceful or hostile errands Emma went into Pröhle's room. The type-founder had set to work

again, and his letter to Salomon was half written. When Emma entered he dropped the pen in surprise: there was a rapt, wild sparkle in those soft hazel eyes.

They had an eager whispered conversation, broken by long pauses. Pröhle at first evaded the young girl's questions, but at last, driven into a corner by her persistent determination, he yielded little by little. When Emma left him, an hour later, the bull-necked colossus had submitted unconditionally, and humbly grasped the trembling hand which she gratefully held out to him.

"And you solemnly swear," he repeated in a low voice, "that you will persuade Fräulein Adele. . . ."

"I will give myself no rest till she has said yes. I feel sure that I can bring her to it."

"Well then — in God's name, so be it! To win that I would risk the very gallows!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE next day was New Year's eve. At about six in the evening Emma went out accompanied by Pröhle.

"I do not know how it is," said the type-founder after walking for about ten minutes in silence at her side, "I have a fearful sense of weight on my soul. I have thought hundreds of times what a triumph it would be to fire the match — and now that we are really going to try for it. . . ."

"Hush, don't talk so loud," said Emma. "It is our only chance; and if it is to come off, New Year's night is the best in the year. What is the use of everlasting delays? Do you believe that there will be any more of you three months hence?"

"No, no," murmured Pröhle. "Still, I cannot help it — I feel as if I were being choked — and it is a dirty job, so there is the long and short of it."

It was curious to see how Pröhle's better sense came uppermost as the hour of his crazy attempt drew nearer. This man, who a short while since had raved and blustered amid his fellow-rebels, the maddest of the mad, suddenly saw the whole universe in a new light. The hope which Emma had put into him would of itself have soothed his frenzy; now the voice of an awakened conscience and the dread of the too-probable consequences did the rest. He would most undoubtedly have

retraced his steps if Emma had not so emphatically reminded him that she held the key to Adele's heart — a statement which the simple-minded type-founder never for an instant doubted. However, he made one more attempt to warn the foolhardy girl.

"Think of the risk you run!" he said. Emma laughed in his face.

"As if that were worth a second thought! My life perhaps? And how can I be certain that my miserable life will not be thrown away without any act of mine? In a world like this where there is no such thing left as Justice. — Bah! — Besides, you yourself admitted that there was every prospect. . . ."

"Yes — in the future. Not now, not just at present," stammered Pröhle. He felt as if he had a noose round his neck. At first no asseverations had seemed too extravagant, no promise too excessive, in return for the prospect of speedy happiness in his wooing; but now he saw more keenly; his confidence in the situation had died out, and at the eleventh hour the radical had become a fervent advocate of social order. But Emma was tired of his vacillation and she spoke a few decisive words.

"I know your secret now," she said, "and if

you and your allies hang back I will walk out into the street and denounce you all!"

"That would be a breach of faith," said the type-founder.

"Well, only come on! Never mind my foolish speeches. — I hardly know myself what I am saying. I have but one idea in my head, and I will carry it out by hook or by crook."

There was a small door to the out-building at the back of the house where our old acquaintance Schulze sold old clothes, which opened straight from the yard on to the staircase; and on the ground-floor, just underneath the garret where Brönner still lurked in hiding, there was a low tap-room, much frequented by the inhabitants of the immediate neighborhood. But there was also a flight of steps down, through a very narrow gangway, and so ingeniously masked from those who did not know of it that it had never been discovered by any of the daily customers. Fritz Pröhle and Emma made their way down, and after passing through a series of cellars, with so many doors and corners that they formed a perfect labyrinth, they came to an underground apartment feebly lighted with hanging lamps. Here, at a long, narrow table, sat about a dozen men — strange-looking figures, with the most

dissimilar faces — and among them the erewhile grocer, author and cicerone, Karl Hackenthal, with his felt hat pulled down over his eyes, holding a roll of paper in his left hand from sheer force of habit. A movement of alarm was perceptible in this mysterious assembly when, behind Pröhle, the girl's pale face became visible.

"What the devil is the meaning of this?" cried a brutal-looking locksmith who occupied the chair.

"I have brought you a lady member," replied Pröhle rather awkwardly.

"A woman! The devil! Do you want to send us all to the gallows?"

"She must never be let out again," said a young man of rather aristocratic appearance.

"Certainly not — she must die!" cried the chairman. "That is what your blundering idiotcy will come to."

This monstrous view of the situation was all that was wanting to alienate Pröhle entirely; scales seemed to fall from his eyes. The first word that threatened Emma's safety had settled the question of his allegiance.

Emma meanwhile walked fearlessly up to the table, and collecting her scanty reminiscences as well as she was able, she tried to play the part to

which she had committed herself. Her anguish of mind made her eloquent; she reproduced Roderich's most vehement philippies, though she did not believe a word of them; and with feigned enthusiasm she flaunted the banner of a party whose ravings she detested in so far as she understood them. But she laid on the color thickly, vividly, painfully — for the men whom she addressed were the dregs of their own party, who would out-Herod Herod, and who looked down even on their own more moderate allies as half-hearted and recalcitrant.

Hard as her part was Emma played it out. Leaning her slender hands on the table, she addressed those men in language that she hardly understood even as she spoke — the language of burning passion. She asked them to give her a share in their secret work, she claimed a place in the conclave of rebels, and a hearing for the scheme she would lay before them.

Pröhle, who was hard beset by some of the party, thought it best for his own interest and for Emma's, to second her demand with all his might. His colleagues had taken pains to make him understand that a confederate who could thus, without license, communicate the secrets of the committee, deserved nothing less than to be hewn in

pieces so as to make those secrets safe for the future. However, the feelings of the meeting gradually cooled down.

"The girl is right!" cried the locksmith. "There are women who can hold their tongue, better than some men we know! If she really means what she says . . . ."

"Why shouldn't she," growled Hackenthal. "She would hardly have risked her head for pleasure, or out of mere curiosity — and she would not have a chance either way if she ever opened her lips to betray us."

"Make her swear . . ." said the aristocratic member.

"Yes — she must be sworn," cried the chairman. "She must take the oath never to breathe a word, even if she should be discovered and taken up."

"Very well," said Emma, her face flushed with fevered eagerness, "I will swear. By God in Heaven I swear — or if you do not believe in God . . . ."

"Silence!" said Karl Hackenthal rising. He clutched his felt hat by the crown and bared his head. "Swear by the vengeance of the People!"

But as she looked up at the bloated creature who shouted the words with theatrical emphasis

Emma felt a shudder of revulsion. She drew back a step, and was on the point of uttering a horrified ejaculation. To sit side by side — cheek by jowl — with this man — horrible thought!

But she did not flinch. She took the oath in a firm voice, with all the hideous formula dictated by the locksmith.

"Now you are one of us, body and soul," he said in a tone of menace. "Do not forget that henceforth the representatives of the people have their eye on you. Now — silence for discussion."

The debate proceeded with undiminished vehemence. The subject under discussion was the distribution of two bales of seditious papers which lay tied in bundles on the floor. They were copies of the same pamphlet which had been slipped into the type-founder's pocket in the tavern where he had had his fray with Arthur. The writer was the aristocratic-looking member, a native of Little Russia, who had in fact organized and selected this secret committee. The report as to the distribution of the pamphlet was not very satisfactory; the police were on the alert; three or four men who had been bribed to diffuse it had been taken up, and though these arrests did not actually endanger the select committee,

as every precaution had been taken to keep the agents ignorant of their names, this sudden and systematic opposition was extremely inconvenient and uncomfortable.

In the course of discussion the conspirators displayed an amount of rashness which would have seemed quite unaccountable if, while detailing their criminal schemes, they had not at the same time betrayed the most amazing self-delusion, and total ignorance of the real state of affairs. The Russian carried his rhodomontade and folly to the point of imagining that an irresistible rising of the masses was possible, by which the capital could be mastered if only the strike were carried out with sufficient promptness and vigor. He had, he said, everywhere marked symptoms which convinced him that the military could be fairly dealt with; and he fondly believed that in the twinkling of an eye-lash he could uproot and overturn a state of things which was the outcome of centuries of development and growth. He was hardly more than a boy, to be sure, and fresh from the school of Muscovite Nihilism, a stranger to whom German history and the German nature were as a book sealed with seven seals.

Emma listened with extreme impatience; when he ceased she rose.

"May I speak?" she said impetuously. The president nodded.

Then she began to unfold her extraordinary scheme. She wanted the blow that the committee were planning for a future day, to be struck at once. She waxed eloquent; speaking as though she had been accustomed for years to address meetings as a demagogue, she urgently pressed upon her audience that there could be no better time than the present for their outbreak; on New Year's eve every one was in a gay and oblivious mood; the "battalions of workingmen" of whom the Russian had spoken, needed no further warning; they were out and about already — in every tavern and beer-shop, and in crowds in the streets. Fritz Pröhle sat in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Stop a bit!" cried the locksmith. "There is something more in this than meets the ear. Look how she turns red and white! It is not all above board, my friends.— She comes in uninvited; she is a perfect stranger here, and yet she wants to strike the blow? To-night? And why to-night pray? All she says is mere jaw. For aught I know there is some one on our track; the house may be blockaded; the vermin are to be tempted out — the whole nest of them together! — Nor it

would not be the first time such a d——d trick has been played.— Rayner, just go and look to the door.— There, she is as white as chalk again! Look—do you see. I tell you she is a spy."

Emma was equal to the occasion.

"Why to-night?" she repeated huskily—and she went on to confess her whole secret to these men feeling all the while that it was a horrible profanation but goaded on to reckless veracity by the one remaining thought: "It is the only way."

She knew of course—Lehrbach had told her—that Otto had sworn that he had no connection with the radical party; but it was prudent at this moment to adopt the view that still found acceptance with the lower orders—that Otto was in prison as the champion of Socialism. By proclaiming his innocence—in which she firmly believed—she would have deprived him of his only claim to the help of this fanatical crew.

In her half-frenzied excitement she hardly knew what she was saying. The only image that stood out clearly in her mind was that of the moment when the prison should be broken open, and the man she loved should make his escape in the general confusion—no matter whither, only away—out of the reach of the men who sought to kill him.

The meeting listened to her in blank amazement.

"A love story!" said the Russian with a sickly smile. "May I offer my humble opinion?"

The president assented.

"Comrades," began the Russian, "you all know that, from the first, I have watched Wellner's career with the deepest sympathy; you are aware that it was I who gave the signal, at the church door, for the first thunder of huzzas. At the same time we must beware of setting the man above the cause. Our programme is drawn up; any outbreak on the spur of the moment would be sheer madness. An obstacle that might prove nothing if we were duly prepared for it, would crush us unprepared. Away then, I say, with sentimentalities. We will express our sympathy with this young lady who takes so much intetest in Otto Wellner and record the matter in our *Acta*."

The nihilist's speech was hailed with unanimous approval. Fritz Pröhle, who would have given his last copper coin to get out of this awkward business, thought it the right moment to put in a word and try to calm the young girl's agitation.

"Give it up," he said soothingly. "It is of

no use, Fräulein Emma. Our colleagues here"—the word colleagues stuck in his throat—"know better."

"What date is fixed for the execution of your plans?" asked Emma turning to the young Russian.

"The beginning of April. You see, we trust you implicitly . . . ."

"Of April!" cried Emma in despair. "By that time all will be lost; he will be tried—carried off—thrown into some distant prison—God knows where! Unless he kills himself first."

The Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"I implore you," cried Emma, wringing her hands. "You must save him! Even if it fails . . ."

The locksmith in the chair interrupted her.

"The question is settled," he said shortly.

Emma sat paralyzed. Then it had all been in vain — this baring of her inmost soul, this farce she had played, this enthusiasm she had feigned!

Suddenly she started to her feet.

"I am suffocating here!" she exclaimed. "Let me go away! I will — I want . . . ."

"Stop," said the man who stood at the door. "May she go, chairman?"

"She must explain what she means to do, what she wants," cried Hackenthal rising. "We

cannot possibly let her go in this state. She is out of her mind altogether."

"Let me pass!" said Emma violently to the man who barred her passage.

"Some one look after the lunatic," said the locksmith laughing. "Hold her fast, Rayner."

"I must go," she said, "I must. Do not you hear? Good God! what is this place I have got into?" And as she spoke she dealt the door-keeper a blow in the breast with all her might; it was unexpected, and the man staggered back; the door flew open, and before Rayner could seize her, Emma had fled.

"Never mind, I will be after her, do you stay quiet," said Pröhle as the conspirators all started from their seats. "I undertake to see that she goes quietly home. You must set it down to her grief and anxiety." These, indeed, were obvious enough. Pröhle went after Emma, while the President of the Committee gave vent to a few strong remarks about him as an outrageous ass; then the meeting broke up by common consent.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMMA had fled blindly along the dimly-lighted passage; in her dread of being pursued she heeded not which way she turned, and in a minute she found herself in total darkness.

"Fräulein Emma," whispered Pröhle; but if there was any answer it was inaudible in the echoing stone passage.

In spite of the darkness Emma went forward, and presently her foot struck the bottom step of a steep flight upwards; feeling her way she soon saw above her a glimmer of light. It was the gleam of the snow in the moonlight, shining through the chinks of a crazy but heavy door. With a trembling hand she felt for the lock — the key was in it; it creaked as she turned it but the door opened.

Emma found herself in the court-yard behind the old clothes-shop. She went into the middle of the little plot and looked about her, cautiously examining the high squalid building for a safe outlet. If she could but have guessed that up there, just under the snow-decked roof, sat the man for whose crime Wellner was suffering! How

prompt would the revulsion have been from fevered anxiety which goaded her to be doing, she knew not what! How eagerly she would have rushed to call the police, whom, as it was, she dreaded as her enemies, and have led the way to the criminal's hiding-place!

After a moment's reflection she was about to make her way towards the door that led into the milk-shop kept by Schulze, the pawnbroker, when the type-founder came up from the cellars. With three steps he was standing by her side.

"Come," he said in vehement excitement. "I have been a fool . . . . This hour's experience has opened my eyes.— I will see you home — or would you rather take a carriage? You are quite over-done; you are trembling all over, Fräulein Emma."

He spoke from the depths of an anxious soul. Fritz Pröhle was in fact as completely cured as ever a Don Quixote on his return from his ill-starred knight errantry, and he heaped himself with reproaches. He could have done anything to spite himself.

"If you are frightened," said the girl firmly, "pray leave me, Herr Pröhle. I do not want you."

"What are you going to do Fräulein Emma?"

"I must consider. I will not give the matter up for lost. — If I die for it . . . . I will try it!"

Pröhle gazed at her in alarm. She looked remarkably handsome, he noticed, as the red light of a flaring lamp fell on her glowing face. She looked taller than usual and her eyes flashed ominous lightnings.

"I cannot, I must not leave you here, alone," said Pröhle a good deal startled.

"Just as you please."

So, Pröhle leading the way, they went out through the pawnbroker's dreary little shop. As they passed the counter, the type-founder muttered a few awkward words of explanation; Schulze, poring as usual over his book, took no notice whatever. So they went on, and out into the narrow street.

Before they had gone far they were overtaken by a short, clumsy man who had also come out of the pawnbroker's shop; his face was a marked one from his wearing a very thick, coarse, straw-colored beard. This was Ephraim Peltzer, the all-accomplished "agent." Glancing up, as he passed them, into the faces of the pair — and knowing every inhabitant of the lodging-house in the Sandgasse as well as if they had been his schoolmates — he felt a strange misgiving, the

uneasiness that haunts a criminal whenever he sees a possible enemy wandering near the spot where his secret is buried. This girl—this Emma Lersner, with her restless eagerness had long been a thorn in his flesh. What on earth were this pair about, here, and together?—He would follow them; more from an instinctive impulse than in obedience to any distinct purpose.

They soon reached a more frequented part of the city and it was now about half-past eight. The weather was brilliant; a sharp but moderate frost without a breath of wind; and a considerable number of people had been tempted out of doors. Supper was just over and it was too early yet for the jollifications to have begun in honor of the New Year.

Emma walked on in silence and gave no sign of fatigue; Pröhle, filled with remorse, kept close by her side, thinking of nothing but his bitter ruth, and heedless of the way she went. But suddenly Emma turned off abruptly. . . .

"Where are you going?" he said pulling up.

"You can come, too—or you can go home. Just as you please."

And he went on again, shaking his head over her strange proceedings, and sighing as he blamed himself for the whole affair.

The crowd grew denser as they went forward; they were in fact in the most thickly populated quarter — the Johannisstadt as it is called, inhabited by artisans and workingmen. Outside a tavern there was quite a mob of young fellows with their sweethearts; an unexpected prohibition of one of their amusements had set them in an uproar. They had been making their way to a dancing-hall when they were informed that music and dancing were suddenly forbidden. There was an alarming case of illness in the family of a personage of high rank, and the back of his house adjoined the premises on which the dancing-room was built.

Youth and pleasure-seeking are callous to the sufferings of a stranger, in fact are pitiléss and brutal; and if this is true even among the gentle and educated whose brutality is superficially softened by hearts of good breeding, how much more is it true among those whose coarseness has never learnt to keep within the bounds of politeness. The crowd were arguing in every key, and the hatred of the workingman to the capitalist found the broadest and freest expression.

"What concern is it of ours?" they shouted. "If the old woman cannot bear the noise, let her go somewhere else. We may die and rot, and no

one troubles himself! It is a scandalous shame! It is the police that want to do us out of our fun. They never can rest till we are crushed, and crawl like so many dogs!"

This was the gist of the raving and growling; absolutely unjust, and, in fact, against their own interests; for while they were wasting time in giving vent to their rage, they might have gone a few streets further on to another Casino where there was nothing to prevent their dancing as much as they pleased.

At the sight of this noisy rabble Emma suddenly lost her head altogether; before Pröhle saw what she was doing, she was standing in the midst of them.

"Heh! what is that woman about?" asked a girl in the crowd. "She looks like a mad thing. How she stares; perhaps she is some relation of the old woman's. She looks airified and bold enough! You will see, she will go off and fetch the police!"

The speakers were all bareheaded and in the humblest attire, and their remarks expressed their envy rather than their convictions as they looked at Emma's striking beauty. At this moment a man with unkempt, matted hair came close up to the young girl and asked her roughly what she

wanted, and what her name was that she pushed herself into their affairs neither "with your leave, nor by your leave."

"What do I want?" repeated Emma in loud, clear tones that were audible all across the street. "I want you — you one and all! Speak — on which side are you?"

"Ha hah!" shouted the factory girls. "She wants to inform against us. Down with her — she is a spy, a police agent!"

"Silence," said Emma, loud above the din, "you are talking nonsense. Yes, you may stare and gape — I can prove what I say. — Do you know the name of Otto Wellner?"

"Wellner?" repeated the shock-headed man. "Otto Wellner, who stabbed Von Düren? He is one of us. — But he had better have left that alone; he has damaged himself and done us no good. Still, he is one of the right sort. — Well, what about him?"

"Why, he was condemned to-day."

"Condemned?" muttered the crowd. "Why, they are in a devil of a hurry."

"Aye!" said Emma with the conviction of a heated fancy. "He is condemned, and is to be executed before midnight."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said an elderly work-

man who, with the others, had just joined the throng. "They don't go so fast as all that. The warrant has to be signed first."

"As I live it is true!" cried Emma clasping her hands. "And what do you know about it? By law and right it should not be so — but law and right are set aside — and should I be so desperate do you suppose if what I say were a lie? — You must save him; you must set him free before it is too late."

The crowd that had collected round the excited girl was increasing every instant.

"Fräulein Emma," said Pröhle, "think, consider what you are doing!"

"Hold your tongue, you dolt!" cried a cooper who was slightly — professionally — drunk. "This lady is quite in the right, you cowardly noodle. Otto Wellner — long may he live — hurrah!" And the mob vociferated in chorus.

The more the throng gathered recruits from all sides, the wilder grew the excitement of each individual; the new arrivals only half understood what was in the wind, but they heard the cooper's vehement objurgations and the applause of the mob, and were soon infected by a spirit of mischief which only needed a determining motive to resolve itself into action. Two constables who were mak-

ing their way through the throng seemed to supply the impulsion.

"Make way — by your leave. . . ." said the two men — at first as civilly as circumstances would allow, but presently with some annoyance at the futility of their efforts. The rabble retorted with jeers and shouts of insolent laughter. This only added to the irritation of the guardians of the peace.

"I take you in charge!" said the foremost; and he laid his hand on the arm of a truculent-looking workman.

"Me?" said the man, taking his clay pipe out of his mouth. "What for? I am standing here very quietly. . . ."

"You come along with me," said the policeman, and his colleague took the prisoner under the other arm.

"Let me go, will you?" shouted the man. "All of you here, be witness that I have only this minute come."

"Yes — this very minute!" shouted several of the bystanders defiantly.

"It is all the same — you just come with me."

The man struggled to free himself.

"Heaven and earth!" bellowed the cooper

who with some difficulty had made his way to the spot. "Is Wellner not enough for you? Do you want another? By all that's holy . . . ! I am a cooper and can swallow as much as most men; but enough is as good as a feast — do you know what that means, because I will show you in less than no time!" And as he spoke he collared the policeman who stood nearest to him and shook him till his helmet rolled off. In an instant both the constables were disarmed.

"That will teach you," growled the cooper. "And if you are wise you will make the best of your way home, you. . . . But stop — listen to me; if you do not set Wellner free . . . Go and let him out this very minute; and if you want to know why: — Because it is the act and will of the people. We will see it done, too. That is what coopers are for!"

This drunken speech was the signal for a general uproar.

"Wellner!" was the watchword.

"We will open the cage fast enough," stuttered the cooper. "The girl was right. A good girl she is, too — a right good sort. She knows what she means. Come on, lads, it is New Year's eve — the day of days for a Revolution! Come on — we will have Wellner out in a jiffy!"

Throughout this wild scene Emma had not uttered another syllable. She was terrified at the flood of humanity that now rolled down the street, with cat-calls and yells and howls — and then her thoughts flew back to Otto, and weary as she was, she let herself be borne forward.

The news of this tumult had spread in every direction with amazing swiftness. At the turning into the Paul-Strasse a troop of about twenty policemen were drawn up to meet the mob. They had been telegraphed for to headquarters and sent up at once: However, they could make no stand against such overwhelming numbers. In the skirmish that took place two or three of the insurgents were wounded, but not seriously. Still, it was more water to the mill-wheel of the ring-leaders.

"They are slaughtering us!" became the cry, and the mob rushed onward with renewed fury.

They got as far as the open square in front of the police-courts, and a perfectly diabolical howl went up from the excited rabble. By this time, in fact, the real demon of revolt had taken the place of the spirit of mischief and rowdiness.

"Down with the Chief of the Police!" they shouted. "Only send out a few of your lads; we will give them a lesson. Well, what are you

waiting for? Come on, only come on. We are ready. We have come to wish Wellner a Happy New Year. Hurrah for Wellner! Hip, hip Hurrah!"

Roaring and shouting in deafening chorus the mob grew louder and more uproarious when they found that no effect was produced — the Police building showed no sign of life within. Then the boldest pressed forward; two or three thundered at the door; one picked up a fragment of stone splintered off the pavement and flung it at a window on the ground-floor where a light was visible, shivering the pane to atoms; this gave rise to a howl of triumph. Inside, a shadow passed across between the light and the broken window; then all was still again.

Suddenly a cry of terror rose from the skirts of the crowd. "The soldiers! They are coming down from the old Town!" And after this cry, silence fell.

Emma was clinging to Pröhle's arm, trembling violently.

"What," growled the cooper who could now hardly keep his feet. "The soldiers are coming down? They are our fellow-countrymen.—I ought to know; I have served my time — I am a fellow-countryman myself!"

"Hold your tongue and don't be a fool!" said another. "If the soldiers are really coming we had better make ourselves scarce."

"Nonsense!" said the cooper. "I know better. The soldiers — that is my business! Don't you be uneasy; I will manage them. I will just speak a few words to them — and here I have a red handkerchief — that will do for a flag! And you will see; in a minute the rascals will come to terms!" He blew his nose loudly on the standard of revolt, and then flourished it above his head.

After about three minutes of indecision they heard the regular tramp of a column of infantry marching towards the Police Courts from the Wallstrasse; at their head rode a lieutenant. His bright sword flashed impatiently, as it were, in the light of the gas-lamps. The mob involuntarily gave way a few steps.

The soldiers halted when they had reached the middle of the square. The officer galloped forward a few steps.

"It is Lieutenant Clairvaux," whispered Pröhle to Emma. "The man has pluck and no mistake! Look how he sits, as cool and as natural. . . ! And a well-aimed stone would crack his skull like a cocoanut."

In a loud clear voice the lieutenant addressed

the insurgents in the usual terms; calling upon them to disperse or the place would be cleared at the point of the bayonet. Again the mob retired a few paces; but they soon paused in their retreat, and from the thickest of the throng rose shouts of mockery, shrill whistling and hallooing.

The young officer repeated his warning; the uproar drowned his voice. For half a minute he still seemed to hesitate; then he turned his horse and rode to the rear. One word from him, and the column moved forward.

Now, at the steady approach of that close mass, with its ominous glitter, the mob suddenly fell to pieces, shrieking and cursing as it disintegrated. Few indeed had ever seriously thought of resistance, and in less than a minute the square was as empty as if it had been swept. Only the cooper remained, his red banner in one hand, and in the other a flask of "Schnaps" which he had emptied at the last moment to supply him with inspiration for his address to his fellow-countrymen—lying on the pavement, a perfectly happy, snoring lout, blissfully unconscious in his slumbers of all that had happened within the last few minutes.

"Halt!" shouted Clairvaux; then, turning to

his second in command who had led the charge, he smilingly stroked his moustache as he said:

"You see, my dear Roskoschny, I was perfectly right. The battle has not cost a tear—like that famous battle in ancient history; you, who are so much better read than I am, will recollect when and where it was fought."

The little force was now divided into three parties, each filing off by a different thoroughfare; the insurgents had vanished down these streets and the point now was to prevent their re-uniting.

Even Emma, who, till the last moment had stood her ground, and, so far as was possible, had remained as motionless as a statue, found herself dragged—nay, almost carried away by Pröhle with the crowd of fugitives.

"I told you so," said the type-founder, again and again, "it is all folly and madness—horrible, utter madness. Oh! Fräulein Emma, what will be the end of it all? If it comes out that you went there . . . . and it will come out.— For Heaven's sake never say a word about those rascals in the cellar.— If you do we are done for, you and I, and all your family! To think that I should see such doings. But it all comes of that madness! Well, it is a lesson to me.— It is a

miserable business, and may I be hanged if ever I get mixed up with sedition and rioting again.

Grumbling out these jeremiads as he went, audibly to his companion though they were chiefly addressed to himself, Pröhle dragged her down the Johannisstrasse. But they were unexpectedly checked; a body of police, among them the two men whom the cooper had handled so roughly, were drawn up across the street with a view to intercepting their retreat, and taking some of the most obstreperous in charge. Six or eight of the rioters were seized. The authorities had issued strict orders that the utmost leniency and caution were to be exercised; only the ringleaders and the more violent of the insurgents were to be touched and no proceedings would be taken against the masses whom they had led into mischief.

Pröhle timidly and cautiously tried to sneak past the little force with Emma Lersner, but a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Here you are!" said the policeman who held him firmly. "You and that crazy hussy!"

"Thank God for that!" said another.

Pröhle turned pale; his heart quaked within him as he muttered an unintelligible explanation. A dozen of gapers who had taken little or no

part in the commotion stood round at a respectful distance, looking on at the strange proceedings; for in fact there could be no greater contrast than that between Emma's appearance and the charge brought against her by the guardians of the peace.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed Pröhle recovering himself.

"What indeed? Just march on will you — you in front, you mock modest baggage. Oh! you may look as if butter would not melt in your mouth — and you were the first to stir up all this mischief!"

"It is altogether a mistake," Pröhle began.

"You can hold your tongue. Do you think we do not know what we are about. Why we had you in charge only a few nights ago, for a row and a fight in the Nordstrasse. Do you mean to deny it? Your name is Pröhle; and as sure as that is true, this woman was at the bottom of all the scrimmage to-night. Her name is Lersner — you see I know — Lersner the agent said?"

This question was addressed to the policeman who had been told off to assist him.

"Lersner — right you are!" said his comrade. "And the other said the same. Get on, Miss; things have come to a pretty pass when even the women . . . . Well, well, they must be taught better."

"Only leave hold of me," said Emma with the calmness of despair. "I will go with you if I must. But this man is perfectly innocent; he had nothing whatever to do with what happened. He tried to stop me — he did everything he could to persuade me, to keep me out of harm."

"Yes, I heard him myself," said a man in a blouse.

"It is all the same; he must come, too."

"Why?" said the workman. "As you know his name . . . ."

At this juncture, as fate would have it, a master smith came up who was known to one of the policemen. He, too, stopped, and hearing what was going on, he warmly seconded the workman's remonstrances. He himself had happened to come out of the tavern just as the row had begun, and he had heard that big man warning and arguing with the girl. After a brief discussion Pröhle was released, although he declared that his own wish was to go wherever Emma might be taken.

Emma, fully conscious that she was guilty, followed the constable to the police office without a word, or even a sigh. Weary and disheartened, she pleaded guilty to every charge that was brought against her. Since her conduct had no

doubt led to a breach of the peace — a crime punishable by heavy penalties — it was impossible to set her at liberty, in spite of the best will on the part of the lieutenant of police, who was predisposed to clemency by the sight of her pale, sad face and uncommon good looks. However, after a short examination she was formally committed, and led away to a cell where she fell senseless with chagrin and exhaustion.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was in fact Ephraim Peltzer, who, unobserved by Emma and Pröhle, had watched the girl's excited behavior, and set the police on their track. After recognizing them in the street he had slunk into a doorway to let them pass, and had then kept them constantly in sight. He was curious to know what Emma Lersner, who had taken up Wellner's defence so fanatically, could be doing in that part of the town.

Peltzer himself had just left the wretched Brönner, who dared not yet show himself in the streets by daylight. He had said all he could to cheer and encourage the miserable creature, and had given him money to go on with, for as matters

stood it was of the first importance to Peltzer that his former accomplice should hold out and never give in. A cold shudder had run through him one day when Brönner, tired of his fears and dreary solitude, had gone so far as to drop the remark that the best thing he could do was to give himself up to the governor of the House of Correction. Nor had the newspaper reports as to Wellner's probable fate done anything to reassure Brönner, for the reflection that an innocent man would spend the rest of his life in misery for his — Brönner's — crime had an unpleasant effect on his nerves. This, added to his general misery and desolation might suffice to drive him to some desperate act of surrender. Peltzer to be sure had represented to him that he might silence his too tender conscience as soon as he was fairly and safely across the Atlantic; if he were then to write to Lehrbach to confess, and to name Fanny Labitzki as his accomplice, that would surely be enough. Still he thought it wise to keep an eye on his man; he took care to visit him, under cover of the darkness, as often as he could manage it, and he provided for his comfort and would often spend some hours with him. After his perjured declaration as to the knife, Ephraim felt a quite magnetic attraction to Brönner's garret.

The policeman whom Peltzer, in his spiteful hatred, had informed of the names of Pröhle and Emma Lersner had not been satisfied with this scanty information. He had asked some further questions and Peltzer — usually so guarded — had been so rash as to reveal from what part of the town they had been coming when they reached the scene of the riot. The low neighborhood which he mentioned had long been regarded with suspicion by the authorities, as probably the headquarters of a more or less extensive socialist conspiracy. Consequently, next morning, when fresh copies of the incendiary pamphlet were found strewn in every corner of the city, a connection between this paper and the riot of the previous evening immediately suggested itself, and before noon of that very day a house to house search was made throughout that quarter of the city.

It was about three in the afternoon when a division of the police made their way from the back street into the out-building behind the pawnbroker's house.

The beer-shop on the ground-floor was first visited, but without any result. From thence they went into the cellars, and there, where the masked entrance to the stairs looked like a very advertisement of a bad conscience, they expected a good

find. They were completely disappointed. The low-vaulted chamber, where the conspirators had met the day before, contained nothing to reward their zealous search. The seats and lamps had been removed, the table was standing against the wall loaded with straw and empty casks; nor was there a single copy of the pamphlet which had been stored there. The secret committee must either have had warning of the intended search, or, as a general precaution, have effaced all traces of their presence — very possibly because the street row had led them to expect some such reprisals.

Their anxiety to discover something grew in proportion as their efforts were futile; they searched every nook and corner of the underground premises, and then, cursing their ill-luck and waste of time, went up–stairs to the second and third floors. In every room they found pale and terrified faces but nothing whatever to justify suspicion. Finally they mounted to the garrets; here they suddenly heard an odd sound of shuffling footsteps. The noise came through a white-washed wall which, to all appearance, divided the loft from that of the next house, but in fact it only shut off Brönner's narrow hiding-place from the garret in which they stood. One of the

policemen laid his ear against the wall — all was still. The searching party were on the point of quitting the premises when some hard substance fell on the floor on the other side of the wall. The clatter was so close to them that not a doubt remained but that they were parted from it only by a slight wainscot, or, at most, a lath and plaster partition; and when one of the men tapped it with his sword-hilt there was no doubt that it was plaster. They went down to the floor below to ascertain whether there was any way up to the room which must exist there. The lodgers, however, knew nothing about it; nay, they gave it as their opinion that if any one were living up there they must have become aware of it. At the same time the attic was not exactly over their's but somewhat on one side, over the rooms where the pawnbroker stored goods taken in pledge.

Notwithstanding his failure so far, the sergeant in charge of the search would not give up all hope of a find. Peeping, hunting, and questioning they at length went into the ground-floor room, where, before Brönner had lived in such abject terror, he had been wont to sit over his spirits, and drink. This room went by the name of the "Treasury," because it was here that the pawnbroker kept everything of any particular

value. When they were there they at once detected a ladder-like stair which wound up behind the chimney to the top of the house.

All this while Brönner quaking in every limb was squatting behind the head of his bedstead.

The loft, from which his sleeping place was divided only by a plaster partition, contained nothing but old rubbish which had remained unclaimed for a year and a day. The sudden hubbub, the loud voices and the rummaging and moving of goods, had filled Brönner with a panic as dire as the trump of doom. Staggering in his terror he had stumbled against the chair and knocked over his glass: his alarm had betrayed him. It was perfectly clear that these men were on the tracks of something or some one, and he at once felt convinced that he himself was the game they were hunting: that the truth had come out with regard to his crime in Von Düren's house, and the criminal's lair had been discovered.

He was too utterly paralyzed to avail himself of the only chance of escape left open to him: instant flight and evasion through the front building. Like the ostrich, he hid his head in the thicket, trembling like a frightened child and listening for the steps and voices.

He was beginning to breathe again, for above

a quarter of an hour had elapsed since the searching party had left the next room, but suddenly his head fell back heavily against the wall, as pale as death. He heard some one come up the secret stair and knock sharply at the door.

He did not stir.

"Open the door!" said the sergeant in command.

"It is all over," thought Brönner with a groan. "I knew it would come! I have been expecting it every hour!" The sergeant knocked more violently and shook the door.

"In the name of the law — open this door!" he repeated.

Brönner slowly rose from his corner; he looked round him; his eye fell on the little window in the roof. With a last desperate effort he seized the iron hook that hung from it, threw it open, shoved the chair close under it, and tried to vault through the opening. But he was too completely unnerved — he could not do it, and he fell back from the sill at the very moment when the police, whose suspicions he had now roused by his strange behavior, broke open the door.

Brönner glared blankly at his dreaded foes. Clutching his forehead with his left hand, and slowly helping himself up with his right he mut-

tered: I knew how it would be — I have dreamed of it a hundred times.

"Why did you not open the door?" asked the sergeant. "What is your name?"

As Brönner made no reply the man went on with stern emphasis: "Do you know what we are here for?" and he fixed a piercing eye on the terrified wretch.

"Do not deny it," he added after a short pause. "Give up everything you have got hidden away here — what? You mean to resist? Well, it will not take long to search this hole!"

"Mercy!" cried Brönner half crazed. "I will confess everything. But it was Peltzer who made me do it. Take me off at once, and let me be tried this very minute. Kill me out of hand if you like, for I am sick of this dreadful life, and the sooner I am out of it the better." And having thus relieved his mind he seemed resigned.

"There — and there —" and he lifted his straw mattress. "There are the tools — it was all Peltzer's plan, and then when he got some money he sneaked out of it: And here is the sheath that belongs to the knife.— I do not know myself what devil possessed me. I lost my head when I saw him come into the room — but I have paid for it a thousand times over or I am a liar!"

The police sergeant, who at first had been bewildered, was beginning to see that a trick of Fate had thrown game into his hands which, though it had nothing to do with the primary object of his investigations, seemed to be even more important and interesting. Peltzer's deposition as to the knife he had recognized had been in everybody's mouth the last few days, and the clue thus afforded was unmistakable.

"Then you confess — ?" he said handing the various objects to his men.

"Do not torment me any longer!" shrieked Brönner, covering his face with his hands. "Take me away; I will tell everything. I have been eating my heart out long enough with fright — and with thinking that the other fellow was condemned, while he was innocent all the time and had not stirred a finger."

The sergeant sent his men down again. He was determined to reap a plentiful crop of laurels and to take full advantage of the stroke of fortune which had thrown the unsuspected hero of a mysterious *cause célébre* into his hands, instead of a suspected conspirator; he would hear this man's confession and bring it, all cut and dried, to the cognizance of the examining judge. Herr Seeborn should have no further difficulties to unravel.

So he cross-questioned the quaking wretch who, sobbing like a school-boy, told him the whole story from the beginning, not omitting to set Fanny's collusion in its proper light.

Suddenly he paused in the middle of a sentence. It struck him that Otto Wellner, who was suffering the penalty of his guilt, had persisted in concealing his real reason for being in the library; and a glimmer of something like magnanimity stirred in his abject soul. Otto Wellner must have some very strong reason for keeping a secret which was so important for his exculpation — for never saying a single word about the lady who had met him there, much less mentioning her name — Lucinda, Brönner thought he had heard him say . . . . And Brönner said to himself that he might perhaps to some extent atone to Wellner for all the suffering for which he was answerable, if he held his tongue on that head and were careful not to betray what he had overheard. So he told his story to match Otto's statement: to the effect that Otto had wandered into the library from the passage, lost in reverie, and had happened to be just on the other side of the cabinet of curiosities when Von Düren had come in.

When Brönner had told his story he was

calmer, and seemed resigned to his fate; for the first time for many long years his hard, coarse nature had found itself capable of a disinterested impulse.— He followed the sergeant obediently, almost contentedly.

In the yard below he was placed between two policemen. Twenty minutes later he was standing in the magistrate's office where, in the presence of the officer who had discovered him, he repeated his narrative word for word. By the magistrate's orders he was led off at once to the examining judge, who, as it happened, was at that moment engaged in questioning Peltzer as to some details that were not perfectly clear.

At the sight of Brönner the "agent's" knees almost gave way under him.

"Your worship," began Brönner, "you can just put a pen through all that. Herr Otto Wellner is innocent—and that fellow lies like a trooper."

"Blackguard!" cried Peltzer starting back a few paces and fixing his eye on the door. But before his guards could stop him Brönner rushed on Peltzer and seized him by the shoulder.

"Hold him fast," he said to the sergeant. "Don't let him go. He is Peltzer—he is the man I told you about: the sneak who has sold himself to the devil to ruin an innocent man."

The examining judge was utterly bewildered.

"But I do not understand," he said, rising from his seat.

But one of the constables collared Peltzer, and Brönner, for the third time told his story; then the police sergeant produced the burglar's tools and the sheath of the knife, laying them on the judge's desk.

"What have you to say?" asked Seeborn, turning wrathfully to Peltzer.

"That it is a pack of lies; that it is all spite and revenge because I — because he. . . . He was always threatening to get me into trouble. . ."

"Such an answer is perfectly ridiculous," said the judge. "No one would accuse himself of such a horrible crime merely to spite an old enemy."

"Yes, I tell you — that blackguard is capable. . . ."

Seeborn, meanwhile, had taken up the knife and was comparing it with the sheath; then he slowly pressed the blade into it. That they belonged to each other was self-evident.

"Ephraim Peltzer is to be placed in confinement," he said. "I will take the necessary steps— and with regard to Wellner — the story holds together in every detail. Even Von Düren's

mistake is accounted for. They are much of a height and their hair. — Good God! It is really wonderful how sometimes false indications seem to corroborate each other. Still, from the first, I have felt that there was a figure wrong in the sum! Well, I can only congratulate myself on being able to throw the light we want on this chaos of evidence."

The sergeant, who was in fact the only person who had thrown any light on the subject, pulled a very long face. Brönner and Peltzer were then removed to different cells in the House of Detention.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next day — the second of January — dawned rosy and cloudless; still the same bright, calm frost, and the air perfectly clear. The sun poured its flood of golden light on the façade of the mansion of the Sunthelms, with its balustered balcony and high-bosomed caryatides. It shone reflected from the plate-glass windows and was admitted in its full glory to the privacy of the baron's "study." There, being refracted from the bevelled edges of a rococo mirror, it fell with

softened radiance on the damascene blades, the polished rapiers, and elegant pistols.

The news of Peltzer's apprehension had reached Baron Anastasius the evening before, and had given him a very bad night. He had walked up and down his room till two in the morning, turning over the incident in his mind and trying in vain to find an issue.

It was perfectly clear that Peltzer — whose denial was but the last dying struggle of a drowning man — would presently divulge the motives of his perjury, and, in the hope of exculpating himself, betray the instigator. Nay, even if he did not actually name him, the matter could not fail to come to light, for it was Anastasius himself who had discovered the so-called agent and his all-important revelation. Now, if Peltzer were found to be possessed of a large sum of money, the fact that he had been paid to perjure himself would be self-evident, and the least skilful cross-examination must force the fellow to tell the truth. It was quite clear to the baron that he had lost the game, not merely in this matter of the perjury, but in his intrigue against Otto Wellner. If the bribery became known his motives for it could not long remain concealed.

Over this second branch of the subject the baron

meditated long and anxiously without convincing himself that after all it was the less important — in fact not worth thinking about. Peltzer's false deposition — that was the rock that hung over his head, and that rock must inevitably fall — fall and crush him.

At two o'clock he went to bed; the worst of the agitation which had hunted him, so to speak, up and down his own room was past. A bitter sneer curled his lips as he closed his eyes, and with a deep sigh, fell asleep.

At eight o'clock, as the sun rose triumphant in the eastern sky, Anastasius woke. He ordered his breakfast and then dressed.

He carefully anointed his thin hair, and devoted even more care than usual to the application of various cosmetics from the gaily-painted pots and bottles that stood on his natty, marble-topped washing-table. To him, indeed, the labors of the toilet, which so many men regard as a necessary evil, were a source of more or less ideal pleasure. As he gave a twist to the curls on his forehead he thought of the effect their delicate curves might have on some innocent maiden's heart, or on the envious soul of Keyser — that bald-headed poet. When he looked in the glass to comb his moustache he would apostrophize

himself, nodding and smirking: "What would not young Clairvaux give to have such a moustache?" As he rubbed his hands in almond-paste, in fancy he felt the touch of the little hands that in the course of many decades he had grasped in those lean fingers; and he smiled to himself complacently, stroking or patting them gently — the symbol or reminiscence of a caress.

This morning he seemed to revel more than usual in these little pleasures; the perfume he bestowed on his scanty locks brought before his fancy a perfect spring-garden, full of roses and beds of violets. He tied his faultless cravat with mathematical precision over the middle pleat of his crackling shirt-front. He carefully trimmed his fine, narrow nails and tinged them faintly pink with a mysterious tincture. This crowning touch of elegance was an invention of his own, and he was proud of it; but he had never imparted the precious secret, and now that he was dressed he poured the remainder away into his washing-basin with a melancholy smile. This was the first and only jarring note in the symphony of the whole performance, which had lasted three-quarters of an hour.

At about half-past eleven he sat down at his writing-table and composed a short letter with

elaborate care. Of this he made four copies, put each into an envelope, slipped a note for five hundred marks into each, and sealed each with five seals. "Registered" he wrote in large letters on the face and then he added the addresses. These notes with five hundred marks in each, were a gallant souvenir to the "young friends" whose society he had cultivated with more or less success during the past winter: the spouting actress and the Polish countess, the blue eyed Miss, and the saucy—and alas! too coy, Adele—they should each and all know that, whatever might be laid to his charge Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe was a gentleman, who would not go out of the world without leaving his card, as it were, in a becoming manner for the ladies he had honored with his notice.

A sigh fluttered from the baron's lips as he wrote Adele's name. If only he could have left this world with the proud consciousness of success in the last flirtation that had engaged his volatile fancy! He was, in his way, a true philosopher; he had settled his score with the past as well as with the future; only one little blank broke the balance of the brilliant array of figures—a blank in the place which the sweet picture of this roguish damsel ought to have filled, framed in

gold, and which looked as bare in the long row of fair faces as the vacant space in the gallery of Venetian Doges. She was a little traitress — as much so as the decapitated Marino Falieri — and in strict justice she had not earned this little remembrance. — Never mind: Anastasius Baron von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe could not now make such nice distinctions. The last act was so near as to make him magnanimous.

He called a servant and desired him to post the four notes at once.

Then he wrote a fifth — to his wife. During the thirty-three years of their childless union Eleonora had not been the wife that could raise a man of the baron's character above the level of his own weakness; in him, indeed, weakness was the man. Even his strength of purpose under certain circumstances had its source in his weakness — in his unfathomable vanity and his desire to shine. This desire which had assumed the proportions of fanaticism, had been the motive of his crime against Otto; the same folly now lent him spasmodic courage to look self-murder in the face without winking an eyelash.

Anastasius was well aware that half his sins lay at his wife's door; still he did not reproach her. She bore his name and in this, too, he would

be the perfect gentleman. He craved the forgiveness of his fellow-actor in the farce of life if his tragical departure from the boards occasioned her any inconvenience. He wished her all success and happiness in the future and expressed his hope that she would persevere in her efforts for the good of humanity and so find ample indemnification for the loss of domestic joys and the intimate sympathy of married life.

"With regard to the reports," he ended, "that will be rife as to the motives for my determination — based as it is on mature reflection — I must leave it to you to believe or to disbelieve whatever you may think fit. To be a fine gentleman is sometimes a harder matter than the mob can imagine. That was what I aimed at, and so I have offended the mob and its low code of laws; at the bottom of my soul I have the satisfaction of feeling that I have acted as my position demanded — I have nothing to repent of."

He addressed this epistle and put it in his pocket, to post it himself at the next letter-box.

Meanwhile the man had returned with the receipts for the registered letters.

Anastasius went to a mirror and smiled at himself with great satisfaction. Then he bid the

servant bring him his hat, his gloves and his neat little cane, and help him on with his long coat.

"By the bye," he said, as the servant waited for further orders, "you might bring me a glass of Marsala. I do not know when I shall get my lunch . . . ."

The man went to fetch the wine. While he was gone Anastasius took down the jewelled revolver, examined the charge, cocked it and then carefully uncocked it. As the servant returned with the bottle of Marsala he slipped the pistol into his pocket.

"Pour it out," he said taking up his stick and gloves; he emptied the glass with the deliberation of a connoisseur, and set it down again saying: "You may drink the rest to my good health."

Then, after carefully wiping his moustache with his handkerchief, he slowly left the house, buttoning his gloves as he went.

"Always a swell!" muttered the porter's wife as she watched the varnished boots flashing in brisk measure in the sunshine.

Anastasius turned into the Louisenstrasse which was full of bustle and business. The bright sunshine and the transparent atmosphere threw an indescribable halo of smiling and dewy freshness over the gay thoroughfare, such as is gener-

ally seen only on a cloudless day in April. The long perspective was as crisp in outline as an image in a camera; the window-panes shone so brightly, the faces of the promenaders were so rosy . . . . Anastasius fancied that he had never met so many fascinating and blooming girls before in the short walk from his own house to the Kornplatz.

In the plate-glass frontage of Gerold and Toussaint's shop he could see his whole figure reflected — his exquisite paletot, his impeccable hat, his gracious and smiling countenance . . . .

He started. In less than an hour, if he did not change his mind, the substance of the elegant personage who looked at him so familiarly, would have ceased to behold the light of day and to gaze into the eyes that there looked into his; would have bid farewell to this realm of splendor and its thousand forms of pleasure and be lost in coldness, darkness, nothingness . . . He paused. Was this indeed inevitable? Was there not yet time to fly — and to carry on the pleasant game a little longer, unknown, in some distant land?

The idea flashed through his mind, a natural reaction of the wavering will-to-live. But he had thought it all out long since. It would take several days to convert into a portable form even a

third part of the capital he would need to enable him to live as he had been living; and he must be prepared for a visit to-day, at once, from the servants of the law to apprehend him under his own roof . . . .

He shuddered, for his tortured fancy painted a picture of the illustrious scion of the houses of Sunthelm-Hiddensöe flying for his life, in the harbor of some great seaport — of the sudden appearance of some grim pursuer who would bar his way, seize his collar, and drag him back again — to the intense joy of the mob whom he could still afford to despise. The mere thought of it turned the scale decisively. He closed his eyes for an instant and then walked on to die, triumphant over this last qualm of regret.

Now he felt a perfect Stoic. He looked down the Prinzessinnenstrasse as he crossed the end of it, and glanced at the sign-board of the confectioner's shop where he had treated Adele for the first time to sherry, as a man looks back on the follies of his past youth. No regrets asserted themselves in his philosophical breast, no hypothesis as to what might have been, supposing—supposing — that Peltzer had not, that day, sat sulking over the newspaper, or picked the butcher's pocket. On the contrary; the thought of Peltzer

lent him wings. In comparison with that low scoundrel he was enviable; for his lot must be a vexatious and disgraceful trial with the grim drama of the tread-mill at the end.

As he walked on, thinking and not heeding, a man ran up against him who rushed past him, hurrying in the same direction.

"Roderich Lund!" muttered Anastasius. "Another wheel in my elaborate machine that has stuck fast and gone wrong. A man who fancies himself a genius — and knows nothing of the true wisdom of life! Poor wretch! I could have managed him better than the rest of them!"

He looked at the ground, meditating.

"Yes — to be sure — Otto! he will be my heir — Pooh! If I cannot gather the flowers myself what need I care for whom they bloom!"

Roderich Lund vanished into the doorway of No. seventy; the baron looked up at the windows, shrugged his shoulders and walked on.

He came to the last houses of the suburb and made his way about a hundred yards across the open ground before he turned to look back. Here the path went up-hill. Before him lay the vast metropolis in the broad sunshine under the brown cloud of smoke that hung over the snow-covered roofs, with its reeking factory-shafts, and the

never-ceasing, distant roar that mounted to his brain like slight intoxication.

How vain and transient was all this turmoil; how fond this eager struggle for the crown of happiness! At this moment it was all so small, so aimless in his sight! Yes, Anastasius was fully equal to the occasion!

Then he turned and pursued his way into the country. He turned off presently from the high-road and reached a small cottage inhabited by a woman with a child of about ten, who earned a scanty living from the proceeds of a little garden-plot.

"L. Hörig, market-gardener," was written in straggling letters on a splintered sign-board.

Anastasius again stopped. As he looked at the little door he was about to enter, he felt as though the past rose in bodily form from the grave to face him. It was in this cottage that, twenty-four years ago, he had laid the first stone of the towering edifice — the inexorable fate which was so inevitably about to fall and crush him.

At that time the name on the sign-board over the door had been "Adolar Thiemssen."

It was late one night when he had crossed that threshold with his valet, the keen-witted,

supple and smiling Molbeck — who had indeed been the first to suggest the crime — and had sat for at least two hours in colloquy with the owners. In the further corner of the room, which was dimly lighted by a smoky lamp, stood a cradle, in which lay a pale fragile infant whose wan features seemed already to feel the cold wings of the angel of death. Its father — Adolar Thiemssen — had abandoned every hope; the little being, which was not more than six months old, hardly blinked its glazing eyes when Molbeck suddenly and triumphantly held the lamp close to its face.

The bargain was struck, by which another child was to be robbed of its inheritance and Baron Anastasius to become possessed of two millions. That other child was Otto von Arlesberg, Herr von Sunthelm's nephew — known to the reader as Otto Wellner of Halldorf. His nephew, Anastasius called the child, though in fact the relationship was less near. The child's parents died within a few weeks of his birth and Baroness Eleonora had taken him under her protection; it was one of the few lucid intervals in the life of this whimsical woman who was always seeking some new outlet for her vanity and whose charitable impulses were wasted in pharisaical display.

However, she had occasion to leave home for some weeks, and she put the infant in charge of its nurse, the wife of Adolar Thiemssen.

It was in the fertile brain of Molbeck, who heard the poor woman bewail the hopeless sickliness of her own baby, that the idea was first conceived of changing the infants during the absence of the baroness, and bringing the baby Thiemssen to die in the baron's house under the name of Otto von Arlesberg. — The deed was done that night. A very moderate sum had been enough to secure the co-operation of the parents. The mother's hesitancy was disposed of by the consideration that she might thus have the melancholy consolation of watching her child to the last.

The infant Thiemssen died two days later. It was buried as Otto von Arlesberg, and all was over some time before Eleonora returned home. Thiemssen and his wife with the real Otto von Arlesberg, left the country within a month; the baron, who had entered into his inheritance, gladly bestowing on them another handsome present.

Thiemssen, however, was a singular being. The presence of the child, which constantly kept him in mind of his crime, and the reproaches of his

wife, who felt that she had sold her own flesh and blood in allowing her infant to be buried under a false name, prompted him to return to Germany in the course of the following year in order to place the child in some one else's hands, for he was determined to be quit of him at any cost. He made his way to a large town in the northwest of Germany where dwelt an old schoolmate of his, one Gottfried Georg Franz Wellner, a bookbinder. This worthy man's wife had lately lost by a terrible accident a child two years old, that they had adopted. Thiemssen therefore was able to persuade them to keep the little boy, now a year and a half old, leaving the bookbinder under the belief that Otto was his own son. Otto von Arlesberg grew up as Otto Wellner, without any suspicion of his parentage; and as his adoptive father left the town within a few years, and settled in the village of Halldorf, his relationship to him never came to his knowledge. Herr von Sunthelm meanwhile triumphed in the success of his scheme, rewarded Heribert Molbeck lavishly, though not altogether willingly, and led the highly spiced and exciting life — which was now so near its close.

All this flashed in less than a minute through Baron Anastasius' brain. He saw that weird

night-picture — the cradle, the flickering lamp, the child's pinched face, and the valet's clean-shaved rosy cheeks — every line of the lying letters which Thiemssen subsequently wrote to the elder Wellner, and the endless vicissitudes of feeling — of confidence or terror — which he had known during these twenty-four years: it all rose before him as vividly as though it had happened to-day.

Would he not have done better to have turned on his heel when he stood with Molbeck at that cottage door? He rested the point of his cane on the tip of his shiny boot, lost in meditation. Then he suddenly raised his classically-curled head with an air of determination, and rapped at the door.

The dweller within came to open it — a tall, stout woman of eight or nine and twenty, still handsome in spite of the deep lines that misery had traced on her face. On seeing her visitor she started and screamed.

"Then you know me again?" said the baron.

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the woman. "Is it possible? What do you want here — after so many, many years?"

"Do not be childish, Louise," said Anastasius, in the tone of a man of the world who contemplates catastrophes unmoved. "The course of

events cannot be altered, so it is of no use to be sentimental — I am not in the best of tempers as it is. I have had things to annoy me, to annoy me very much. People in the city there—odious, disgusting place — have conspired to vex and irritate me in every conceivable way. Then I remembered that out here there was one kind and faithful soul that used, once upon a time, to care for me greatly — so I thought I would come for a few minutes chat."

"Oh, Herr Baron!" exclaimed the woman, covering his hands with kisses — and then she burst into tears.

"Be quiet," said the baron. "I cannot bear that now. You, of all people have a right to hate me, and you alone have retained anything that bears even the semblance of friendship. Here — here is some money; it will comfort you a little after all these years of neglect. Is the boy at home? I should like to see him. I am going away for a long time . . . ."

"I expect him at half-past four."

The baron looked at his watch. "That will keep me here too late. Besides . . . . it is better as it is. Have you ever told him?"

"Never, never; not a living soul.— Did I not swear to you?"

"That is right; and of what use would it be? . . . . Kiss me, Louise. You were one of the handsomest girls—and even now, in this dim light, your eyes are as bright as ever . . . . Good-bye."

These were the last words ever uttered by Anastasius von Sunthelm. Quite calmly, with his hands clasped behind his back, he walked on to the wood that lies outside the city. Surrounded by the intoxicating turmoil of the capital the weapon might have trembled in his hand; he must withdraw and detach his sympathies from the external aspects of life before he could part from life itself. As the king of a herd of stags seeks the thickest of the forest to die in, so Anastasius sought a remote spot, where none perhaps might pass for weeks to come. The scandal-mongers in the city might puzzle their brains to guess what had become of the brightest ornament of their circle . . . .

This dream, however, was not realized. Hardly an hour later two wood-cutters found the gallant and fashionable nobleman lying in a pool of blood. He had evidently taken his stand against the trunk of an oak tree in order to make his exit from the world in a becoming manner. But the shot which he had fired into his mouth with the

jewelled revolver had not perhaps caused instantaneous death; for he had slipped sideways, and he had convulsively fired the second barrel, but the charge had missed its aim.

The wound in his blood-stained and ashy pale face had disfigured him horribly. The two men, shocked at the sight, ran all the way into the city and informed the authorities.

Thus died Anastasius von Sunthelm, the gentleman *par excellence*, the irresistible and insatiable lady-killer, the wearer of faultless cravats — and of a feather-weight conscience.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRÖHLE had reached home with the overwhelming news of Emma's arrest, before the death of the old year. The whole party — already in great alarm at Emma's prolonged absence — were almost beside themselves at this climax. Frau Lersner said not a word, but presently fell into a fainting-fit which gave the others fresh cause for alarm.

Adele Jakoby was completely upset; her whole nature seemed unhinged. For the first time for many months an actual and terrible

trouble had come upon her, and changed even the look of her features. With the help of the type-founder she did what she could to recover her aunt. Pröhle, in the midst of his bewilderment and anxiety, was conscious of a feeling of surprise at finding himself employed to assist the girl without her calling him a rhinoceros or some such clumsy quadruped.

Heinzius, too, who had come home the worse for his rash visit to Peltzer—with a bandage over a black eye — shed honest, hot and heartfelt tears, as bitter as those he had dropped over the fate of his beloved Otto. "*Aequam memento! . . .*" he had began with a sigh; but classic philosophy had lost its powers of consolation.

In point of fact Heinzius, with his one eye, wept over two disasters: not merely the disgrace which had befallen Emma Lersner, but the positive certainty, now beyond a doubt, that there was no glimmer of hope for him, no possible reward for his passionate devotion. He knew that Emma's love for Otto, even if it were scorned by its object, even if the perversity of misled justice should result in the cancelling of the name of Otto Wellner from the roll of respectable society—and, to his despair, the worthy schoolmaster could foresee no other issue — even then that love

would burn forever, like the lamp in the Holy of Holies. And so Herr Heinzius wept; silently, like Niobe veiling her majestic head before the wrath of her Immortals.

Martha, too, wept—but more calmly; she was not wholly carried away by the trouble that had overwhelmed the others — she might be compared to a string that vibrates when the lower octave is struck.

One person was wholly unmoved by the disastrous event; this was Roderich Lund. While the others were puzzled and bewildered by the news, to him it was an unsolvable riddle. Emma Lersner — that gentle guileless creature — in the hands of the police! And on a charge of riot and breach of the peace! It seemed to him so impossible that he regarded the story as a pure invention of some intriguing enemy. It must be all cleared up in the course of the next day.—Even without this conviction he could not but have sympathized fully with his fellow-inmates. New Year's eve had been so eventful to the poet, so full of marvels and surprises that he was wholly absorbed in the most selfish feeling that ever stirs the human breast: the consciousness of loving and being loved.

Martha Voss had promised to be his wife.

He had flung himself at her feet in an ecstasy of passion — a poet, not only in his thoughts, but in his life. The remainder of the day had flown in dreamy rapture and Martha, by nature less vehement than her tempestuous adorer, had been carried away by the exaltation of his ardor and genius.

They all remained together till four in the morning talking over, again and again, all their hopes and fears, and trying to comfort and encourage each other.

Up from the "Thorn-bush" came loud shouts of all hail to the New Year, and it was with a bitter pang that Heinzius recalled the blissful evening when the friends who now sat anxiously racking their brains over the enigmas of fate had gathered gaily round the punch-bowl. "*Sic transit gloria*" he sobbed to himself. "*Valet ima summis mutare, et insignem attenuat Deus.*"

But in spite of everything the stricken family went to bed and to sleep sooner than Roderich, who, with his poet's optimism, could take things so lightly. He could not help it: he was happy in the midst of their grief — and happiness gives no rest to those she blesses. He sat down at the writing-table and took up a pen; he tried in vain to put his emotion into words. Then he tore up

the scraps he had written for they seemed to him unworthy of the heavenly rapture in which he was living.

It was striking six before he threw himself on the bed, and by nine he was dressed again. He went into the sitting-room, where everything still remained as it had been left late last night.

Ten minutes later Adele Jakoby made her appearance. She now undertook the household duties in Emma's absence though hitherto she had avoided taking any part in them. She knelt down in front of the stove and lighted the fire; she put the furniture straight, more noisily to be sure than her gentle cousin, and wiped and dusted without taking any notice of the poet.

Roderich, who had briefly wished her good morning, for his part did not trouble himself about Adele. He had knocked at Martha's door and a dialogue was carried on between the two in which Adele, unlike her usual self, took absolutely no part or interest, till at last the young girl came out of her room in her best and prettiest Sunday garb.

"This is really too much of a good thing!" exclaimed Adele as Roderich took Martha in his arms and kissed her passionately.

By ten o'clock breakfast was ready and the

coffee steaming on the neatly laid table; Adele had done everything with her own hands, and as matters stood, no one was in the mood to criticise her efforts. At about half-past ten Roderich proposed to Martha that they should go for a walk in the town. He longed to be out, in the clear frosty air, among the bustle of humanity; perhaps, too, he wished to display his new and beautiful acquisition, as a child takes its doll out for a walk; for the strange mortal was as full of puerile traits as any other genius on record in history

Arm in arm, clinging closely to each other, they made their way through the humble quarter of the town and reached the park which was already full of people. Roderich talked incessantly, and Martha was enchanted to listen, only putting in a question or a word of sympathy now and then, in her soft contralto tones.

On the slope where the plane-trees grow, the most crowded part of the promenade, they met a tall young officer. As he caught sight of Martha a faint smile of recognition lighted up his face as much as to say: "I know that girl," and at the same moment he moved his hand as if he were about to bow. But he evidently repented of the impulse and tried to conceal it by an indifferent gesture.

Roderich, however, had noticed this little pantomime.

"Do you know that gentleman?" he asked in some surprise. "Why do you blush so? I do not understand."

Martha answered evasively; but presently confessed that she had in fact met the officer two or three times.

"Where?" said Roderich.

"When I was living — at the lady's . . . ."

"The man is a cad," cried Roderich. "If he knows you why does not he bow? And if he does not mean to bow, why does he make these grimaces?"

"Pray, pray!" exclaimed Martha, clinging more tightly to Roderich's arm. "What need we care about that man. You know—I told you . . ."

"I know nothing about it, not even the insolent fellow's name!"

"How you excite yourself. His name is Clairvaux — Lieutenant Clairvaux."

"I will know what this Lieutenant Clairvaux means by it. If any one observed his proceedings. . . . ! I cannot and will not put up with it!"

She succeeded in diverting him from the subject and it was not again discussed during the rest of their walk; but it was not forgotten.

Next morning Lund called at the lieutenant's lodgings, and with ill-disguised wrath demanded an explanation. Clairvaux was perfectly calm.

"Your name is not unknown to me," he said with a smile, "Doctor Wolf and Professor Salomon have spoken very highly of your talents. You are one of our most gifted poets — and therefore I am disposed to overlook the somewhat brusque character of your visit, which, however, gives me much pleasure.— But you are really too sensitive, my dear sir. I had not the remotest intention of offending you or the young lady. On the contrary — I thought that it might perhaps not be agreeable to her to be recognized . . . ."

"Why so ?"

"Bless me ! I do not know what your connection with the young lady may be . . . . It would be extremely unpleasant to me . . . ."

"Allow me to request you to set aside all consideration for my feelings and to say what you mean in so many words. I take it for granted that you will make no assertions that you are not able to prove."

"Certainly not," said the lieutenant, piqued by his tone. "But I must add that I am much embarrassed as to what 'assertions' I can make at all. What do you want to know ?"

"What can have given you reason to suppose that Fräulein Voss would find it disagreeable to be recognized?"

"Did I say so? Well — to be sure — the house where I made her acquaintance. . . ."

"Go on," said Roderich with a gasp.

"It annoys you," said Clairvaux. "Pray let the matter drop. Even a poet must have enough knowledge of the world to understand that when he stoops to pluck a rose he cannot always expect to find the morning-dew on the blossom. . . ."

Roderich was trembling.

"And what right have you to make this very unambiguous comparison?"

"Well — the house in which I repeatedly met Fräulein Martha. . . ."

"Still I do not understand. Fräulein Voss was paid companion to a lady. . . ."

"A certain Frau Tharow, whose reputation must make any further comment superfluous."

"But you visited at the house you say?"

"Bless me!" said Clairvaux with a smile, "a man loses nothing by such little escapades . . . You yourself must know . . . But at the same time he does not in his hours of reflection, conceive a very high opinion of the mistress of such 'English classes.'"

Lund was speechless. At length he exclaimed with angry vehemence: "Fräulein Voss knew nothing of all this!"

"Hm," said the lieutenant. "Compared with the others to be sure she was bashful I admit. At the same time when Herr von Tyllichau dropped in, her face would brighten. — You must blame yourself if I am telling tales out of school . . . You would have it."

"Certainly — undoubtedly. I must know the worst. — What about Herr von Tyllichau?"

"He was particularly sweet on the girl. It was his doing that she came from the country place where she was. At first she was shy, but that soon wore off: and at last they were to be seen, arm in arm, walking up and down the Shakespeare Gallery — that is what Frau Tharow calls a long, handsome room into which the others open. . . ."

"That will do," cried Roderich. "I have your word of honor that this is exactly true?"

"My word of honor."

"Good God!" cried Lund with furious indignation. "And is it possible that a foul wretch like this Frau Tharow should live and thrive unpunished? And what are the miserable creatures who are usually to be seen in her house?"

"Girls of the lower middle class, the daughters of respectable parents who never suspect what is going on behind their backs. Tharow has kept up appearances to this day. But what ails you? You are as pale as death . . . I hope. . . ."

But Roderich heard no more. He could not bear it any longer; he hastily took his leave.

His mind was made up. He must question Martha at once, and if she confirmed all that Clairvaux had told him he must break with her forever.

He fled along, heedless of the comments of the passers-by who turned to stare at him; it was at this juncture that he so nearly pushed Baron Anastasius into the gutter as he was making his way, with his revolver in his pocket, to the scene of his last act.

Lund rushed up-stairs and locked himself into his room; he wanted to collect himself; he wanted to be perfectly calm before he spoke a word on the subject that was causing him such torture, for he was really afraid of his own violence.

Martha Voss had remained at home that morning, as Adele could not get leave from her employers, to help Frau Lersner. She was sitting in the room which she had shared with Emma

and doing some embroidery in a frame, which the imprisoned girl had left unfinished. Dinner was over; Frau Lersner was taking a nap; Adele was on the point of returning to the shop. Roderich waited till the sound of her swift footsteps had died away; then he went into the sitting-room and knocked — as he had done yesterday with far different feelings — at the door of Martha's little room.

When he opened it to go in she looked up from her work with a happy smile, pushed the frame aside, and sprang up to meet him. But Roderich held up his hand.

"Martha," he said, forcing himself to speak calmly, "I have something to say to you."

"You frighten me. — What has happened?"

"Nothing new, so far as I know; but old tales have come to my ears. I never asked you about your past life — I trusted you. It was foolish, no doubt, and I acknowledge my folly. But now — speak out. What took you to the house of that woman Tharow, a disgraced and wretched creature, only fit for the house of correction?"

"Good God!" exclaimed Martha turning pale.

"My question startles you! Then you confess. . . .?"

"Roderich!" she implored him. "If you only knew!"

"I know too much. But I require confirmation of it from your own lips. Look me in the face and dare to lie! Is it true that Herr von Tyllichau found you this 'situation;' that he was in the habit of visiting that foul old woman — of visiting you? Yes or no?"

She gazed at him — as white as death.

"Yes — but I had. . . ."

"Good! Very good!" shrieked Roderich, tearing his hair with rage. "'Yes' — point blank 'yes.' By God! I could better have borne that you should have lied and said 'No.' — 'Yes.' — There is a brutal simplicity about it, a maddening frankness! — Then this was what made your dreamy eyes so sad: you were conscious of your hidden shame, or longing, perhaps, for the joys of the past? — Faugh!"

"You have no right to be so cruel," cried Martha, calling her insulted pride to the rescue. "You have nothing to accuse me of but the folly of an inexperienced girl. I was. . . ."

"Folly! you call it folly!" interrupted Roderich frantically. "Oh yes — there are plenty of pretty words to cloak such proceedings — the villain who seduces a girl is her 'friend,' and

your shameless orgies are 'English classes.'—And there are euphemisms for other names not fit for ears polite; for instance for. . . ." And he spoke the foul damning word that brands a woman's soul. Martha uttered a cry of despair:

"Oh! Roderich. — You, you!"

"Hypocrite!" he said, clenching his fist. "Dare you pretend that the word sears your soul when you are so familiar with the thing? Deny, if you can, that you knew full well what lay before you, that you hastened to your shame and disgrace. Do you know the Shakespeare Gallery, may I ask?"

The horrible pain that had crushed the poor girl found relief in passionate tears. She had come slowly towards him, and now, incapable of speech, she dropped on her knees, sobbing convulsively and wringing her hands in anguish.

Roderich glanced down in bitter wrath at the crouching creature that silently craved for mercy. She was too deeply wounded to find a word, a thought of explanation. And even if she had — would Roderich have believed her? The young officer's word of honor to him outweighed a thousand woman's oaths and asseverations. Her maidenly shame and broken spirit he took for a tacit confession.

He stood over her for a few seconds, rigid with contending passions — loving her, hating her. Then he crossed his arms and said in husky tones.

"Wretch! I have no words to tell you how I loathe and scorn the very sight of you! Go — go your own way, wallow in the mire! — But you will never see me again."

He turned and hastily quitted the room.

He heard her, as he fancied, follow him to the door and there drop with a faint cry — he thought she called him — spoke his name — and it sounded like a call for help. For an instant the old tenderness surged up in him . . . If she were innocent after all! — But it was impossible. Clairvaux's frank, manly face was before his mind, and the fleeting doubt was blown to the winds. Crazed with pain and wrath he shut himself into his own room, and threw himself on the floor.

For a while the storm raged inarticulate in his breast. Then he pulled himself up, meaning to leave the house. This very day, at once, he must find another home and begin a new life— a life of hard work and reckless pleasure-seeking. She — that wretched girl should never think that he could be miserable for her sake.

As he crossed the landing Frau Lersner came out of the sitting-room.

"What have you been saying to Martha?" she asked reproachfully. "She was quite beside herself, and so pale. . . ."

"Nonsense, it is nothing."

"But it frightened me. I went into her room — for I heard you talking to her — and she was sitting at the table with the tears pouring down her cheeks, as white as death. Presently she came out and gave me this note; I was to put it into your hands. There — now read it and when she comes home make it up with her. I can tell you she was like a crazy creature." Roderich opened the envelope. The note was a short one — as follows:

"I am not guilty in the way you suppose — but I feel that even if you took back the words you have spoken, all must be over between us. The disgrace of ever having entered Frau T.'s house must cling to me like a brand. I myself cannot live it down, and you, whom I have loved above all things, must bear no stain. Farewell, Roderich — forgive me for having hurt you.

"Martha."

"When — when did she go out?" asked Roderich with a shudder.

"About twenty minutes ago."

"And you could let her go — in such a state of excitement?"

"I could not stop her."

Roderich did not wait to think. His bitter revulsion of feeling had exhausted itself like a fit of drunkenness. If Martha had done herself an injury! Now, he really understood how cruelly he had insulted and wounded her He must find her — he must save her and win her back to him, or his own life was henceforth blasted and waste.

Without any plan, haunted only by fearful imaginings, he wandered about the network of streets. It was a mad enterprise to try to find, in this chaos, the one being who was flying from him. He did not come home again till long after dark, his face quite changed by its expression of anxiety. His last faint hope of finding that Martha had returned was disappointed. Till long past midnight he sat, at the open window, watching, longing, heart-broken. In vain. Then a chill ran through him as if the soul of a dying creature was wafted past him. He knew it now: his life's joy was lost to him forever.

CHAPTER XX.

On New Year's morning Otto was duly informed of the events of the previous evening. Notwithstanding the apathetic resignation which, during the past few days, had weighed on his spirit, this news excited him to eagerness. The warder, who told him that the girl was a handsome girl — a real beauty, and so gentle and submissive that it seemed almost impossible that she should have made such a mad attempt, at the same time questioned him about this thing and that which might throw some light on the mystery, and thus revived certain reminiscences and incidents, certain feelings and reflections which almost made the prisoner forget the sword that was hanging over his head.

The young man's vivid fancy worked it all out: He pictured to himself the course of the evening's events up to the moment when Emma was brought to the prison, and puzzled himself with wondering what could have happened to transform a modest, innocently happy girl of that rank of life into a fanatical revolutionary. Her love for him must indeed be great if her fears for

his safety could thus metamorphose her inmost nature, if she could thus fling to the winds everything she had hitherto clung to and believed in!

He remembered a thousand little details which might long since have revealed to him the treasures of devotion that lay in Emma's heart, if his eyes had not been holden by his insane passion for another man's wife. That passion he had now lived down in remorse and shame; but this was the first time that he felt with acute regret how different his fate might have been if, instead of walking in the fierce glow of that sun he had been content with the milder light of the restful moon. "I feel, if I but think of thee, as though I saw the moon" — Goethe's lines haunted him like a bewitching melody. He knew now what it was that had affected him so deeply when, with storm-tossed heart and brain, he had gone into the peaceful room where Emma used to sit at work by the little lamp. Calm, heavenly moonlight beamed from her sweet face, and gave him the same feeling that soothes the spirit under the soft twilight of a summer night brooding over dewy lawns . . . If only Emma had crossed his path before he saw Lucinda! He would then have borne a charm against that baleful beauty; he would have known too well where true happiness

and peace of mind were to be found. Now it was all too late. Hopeless — desperate — he had only a hideous future to look forward to — and she, if she loved him half as well as her actions would imply, must inevitably be wretched.

The day dragged on in these torturing reflections. He thought over his hapless lot till at last he was in sheer desperation. He clenched his fists; he struck his forehead against the cold wall. His young vitality rebelled against the horrible pictures which seemed, like demons, to mock him in every corner. With fearful prescience he contemplated his trial, his condemnation, the long years of coercion, in the prison uniform, while, outside, the world was bright with flowers, and fame and love smiled on other lives.

Into the midst of these dark imaginings broke the first hint of the sudden turn in his affairs. The warder — himself thunder-struck — told him that a man named Brönner had been arrested, and had confessed the crime of which Otto stood accused; and that at the same time Peltzer — the Agent, as he called himself — being suspected of perjury had also been placed in custody.

The revulsion of feeling was almost more than Otto could bear. He had reached that stage of acute despair which, if it recurs, ends in gaol-

madness; and now he suddenly saw before him the golden gate of freedom. It paralyzed him like an electric shock. He stared wide-eyed at the gaoler — his lips twitched convulsively, he tried to speak but his hollow voice rattled in his throat. At last he gave vent to a cry, a shriek of joy. He seized the man by the shoulders and shook him, and then helplessly leaned his head upon his shoulder.

"Is it true?" he murmured hoarsely. "I will kill you if one word of it is false! — Brönner—is that the wretch's name? How was he discovered? When? Where? And he has confessed — all, everything? It is impossible! A hardened villain would not pour it all out at once.—And Ephraim Peltzer? I know the scoundrel! He will lie, lie through thick and thin—I see in your face, it is a lie. . . ."

"I know no details," said the warder, "and I have no business to stand here talking so long. The inspector forbade it only this morning. But I can tell you for certain: the worst of your time here is over."

And he left the cell.

Otto spent a sleepless night. The following morning — while Anastasius von Sunthelm was performing his last toilet — the gaoler came in

later than usual. When the bolt creaked in the door Otto thought that it was to let him go free. This was a mistake; and the news the man brought added bitterness to the disappointment.

"You know?" said the old man with a cunning smile.

"Know what?"

"That the real criminal has been discovered... you should have seen it. — All yesterday the girl sat quite cast down, and as still and quiet as a wax image. The man who has her in charge told me she had never stirred from one spot, and never eaten a mouthful. So I thought that if her heart was so set on getting Herr Wellner out of the scrape she would be glad to hear how everything had come out. So I just went in — though it is not allowed — I went in to speak to her; and I told her just what I told you yesterday, and a little more, for I picked up some more at home from my old woman — where she got it all God only knows! At the first word up she jumped— the young woman I mean — looking as if she had risen from the dead. She turned red, and she laughed, and she cried — and then, when she understood that, in a way, it was all her doing.— Ah! you did not know that. — Well, it was in consequence of the riot that the police went to

search the house where Brönner was in hiding, and though it was a mad business and punishable by law some good came of it. — It is a pity the poor girl should have got into trouble about it."

When he was alone again the words ran in Otto's brain. Then it was to her that he owed his release. She had, happily, failed in reaching her end by the high-road; but by a side path, of which she had not even been aware, she had reached it after all. And the news of this happy result — happy only for him and not for herself— had filled her with unselfish delight; she could forget her own unhappy situation in the thought, the certainty, of having worked to save the man she loved.

That hour bound them inseparably. In Otto it gave birth to gratitude and love, in Emma to exquisite hope. She now knew that the man she idolized, who, till now, had seemed to her to dwell, unattainable, among the clouds, had been deeply moved by all she had dared and done for him; — from what she was told by the warder who, it must be owned, neglected his strict duty, she could guess enough of Otto's feelings to fill her with rapture.

It was two o'clock when the prisoner was

fetched to the examining judge's office. Seeborn received him with extreme politeness.

"Herr Wellner," he said with much solemnity, "it affords me the greatest satisfaction to be able to inform you that fresh evidence of an irrefragable nature enables me to set you at liberty."

Otto bowed.

"The actual perpetrator of the crime committed on the fifteenth of December has been discovered. All the details of his confession tally precisely with the facts revealed by circumstantial evidence. The coincidences which made your guilt seem probable are completely accounted for by the light of recent revelations — particularly as the most important witness for the prosecution, Ephraim Peltzer, has just confessed that his deposition as to the identification of the weapon was an impudent lie. He will of course be tried for perjury. You, Herr Wellner, thanks to the exertions of Justice, have the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing your innocence set in the clearest light. — You can go, Herr Wellner. At the same time allow me to notify you that I shall, before long, be obliged to request your presence as witness for the prosecution of Brönner."

"I? As witness? I thought he had confessed."

"So he has. But we can never have too much evidence in corroboration of such self-accusation."

"And to what shall I be expected to depose?"

"To everything that the judge may deem important. You will gather most of it from these notes . . . ."

"And I shall be examined on oath?"

"Certainly."

A cold dew stood on the young man's brow: the happy anticipations that but just now had lent him wings of hope gave way to chill anxiety. It was written in the stars, then, that the tenacity which, all through his own trial, had never deserted him was to be unavailing at last. On oath he could not escape telling the whole truth, could not avoid putting his benefactor in the pillory before the eyes of a gaping crowd. This would ruin all; it mocked him like a gibing demon.

There was nothing to be said, and he went away.

He at once made his way to his lodgings; the sense of this cruel necessity gripped his heart. At last, after tormenting himself over it the whole way, an expedient occurred to him — not altogether a pleasant or a hopeful one, so far as he was concerned, but still a possible alternative.

He must go away, far away, beyond the frontier, where the judge's subpœna could not reach him.

This, however, was a matter of some difficulty; he had no money, no means of earning any, and was more utterly adrift now than even when he first came from Halldorf. But there was no choice: The good and generous man to whom he owed so deep a debt of gratitude, must at any cost be spared, even if he himself must sacrifice his life's happiness for it. He would leave to-morrow morning.

And Emma? As the question rose to his mind he felt how deep and true his love was, young as it was. It was unutterably grievous to him to be forced to leave her, helpless and unhelped, under the weight of an accusation of which it was impossible to foresee the issue. This gave rise to a fresh struggle in his soul, new doubt and new anxieties; but his mind was made up. Would that the antagonistic feelings which rent his heart might be his only punishment for that base and hateful episode.

He determined to conceal his purpose from all his friends; no one should have a chance of dissuading him; at the same time he thought he would entrust Emma's fate to the good man who had stood by him as his counsellor and advocate.

He would go to Lehrbach in the course of the afternoon, thank him for the last time for all his affection and kindness, and then quit the city where his evil destiny dwelt in the form of a beautiful woman — never to return.

At home in the Sandgasse he found Heinzius, Frau Lersner and Herr Pröhle. It was about an hour since Lund had set out in search of his Martha.

The little party received him with indescribable delight. Heinzius embraced him again and again; Pröhle could not let go of his hand, and even Frau Lersner forgot for a moment the hapless lot of her darling Emma. They knew already of the incidents that had led to Wellner's release but they had not expected to see him so soon.

As soon as Otto had changed his clothes he went to see Lehrbach. The lawyer received him kindly, but not without an infusion of reserve. He, too, had known the facts since yesterday; and he congratulated the young man with a certain formality. Otto was somewhat surprised at Dr. Lehrbach's not having visited him immediately in prison, for his counsel had been to see him in his cell on slighter pretexts.

What could have come between them?— For the more warmly Otto expressed his thanks the

more coldly did Lehrbach repudiate them; the way in which he constantly repeated that he had done no more than his duty was positively repellent. Otto had looked forward to a very different reception.— Was it possible that a suspicion had dawned in the husband's soul? Otto asked himself, but found no answer to the question. Perhaps it was the germ of a suspicion, which would perish as soon as Otto had opened his heart to him.

And it was such a comfort to be able to speak out! Otto, bespeaking his protector's paternal interest in Emma Lersner, confessed with much emotion that she was the one and only being he loved, and that his hopes and fears for the future were inseparable from her fate; and the sincerity with which he spoke made his words impressive. He told, with frank simplicity, how the true aim of existence had been revealed to him in his solitude, how his whole nature was one with Emma's, how she alone of all women could make him happy. And as he spoke — half embarrassed like a shamefaced child, half eager, as feeling the supreme importance of securing the lawyer's interest in Emma and her fate — a strange battle was fought out in Lehrbach's mind, ending in a calm.

"I will do what I can," he said deliberately.

"But you must bear one thing in mind: the law has in this case, been positively and indisputably defied. So cherish no false hopes."

As Otto was leaving the room Lehrbach added with some hesitancy.

"By the way, you will of course be called as witness for the prosecution in Brönner's trial. That being the case . . . ." He was about to say more, but broke off. "It does not matter for the present," he said indifferently: "When you are subpœnaed I will speak of it again." Otto had turned hot and cold at the lawyer's speech.

"Thank you," he murmured and he hastily took his leave, as if he feared any further discussion.

Lehrbach paced his study in extreme agitation. Since Lucinda's confession of her secret he had suffered anguish beyond words. The thought that the image which he had worshipped as supremely pure could be other than spotless was ever present to his soul. He had never swerved from his first resolution to require no expiation till Lucinda was convalescent and Otto set at liberty. Now his ungrateful protégé was free; he had dared to come into his presence — his, the man he had aggrieved — a sort of embodied defiance — and still Lehrbach had not yielded to

that flaming wrath which he felt to be due to his pride and his sense of injury.

As soon as he had heard that Otto was exonerated beyond question he had set to work with elaborate care to meditate some way of revenging himself that should be at once dignified and effectual. The part was a particularly hard one to play. It must be so carried out that the spectators should not suspect the source of the plot; he must find some pretext, supply some artificial motive, and this was deeply repulsive to a man by nature so sincere and honorable.

The best course he could think of — that in fact which had originally occurred to him — was to seek a quarrel at an early opportunity, to provoke his foe to some trivial impertinence and under cover of retaliation, to punish him for the real unpardonable injury. He pictured to himself the moment when he should, in cold blood, take his aim at the lad for whom he had once felt such genuine affection, send the unerring bullet through his heart, and say in his dying ear: "Be under no mistake as to the sin for which you are punished; this is the meed of ingratitude."

He felt, too, that with the man who had betrayed him, their secret would be buried out of the world, and thus any roundabout plan for

avoiding the dreaded cross-examination at Brönner's trial would be needless; every risk of its leaking out would be removed.

The vision fleeted as swiftly as it had formed. The obvious advantages that he must derive from the accomplishment of his revenge sufficed to fill him with a horror of it. And indeed, deeply as Otto Wellner had wounded and injured him, his old paternal affection was not altogether extinguished. Nay, Otto's strong reserve had revived and strengthened it. In spite of his pride Lehrbach was unprejudiced and just; he understood the overwhelming force of passion and, half against his will, he paid the tribute of sincere respect to the strength of character which Otto had subsequently displayed. He thought all this out for the hundredth time, pacing the room with flushed cheeks and eyes fixed on the ground; not without a sense of triumph in his own moderation and self-mastery. Then he remembered Brutus, who condemned his own son to death; and he thought again that, for the sake of principle, and to satisfy abstract justice, he was in duty bound to execute the offender. — But death? Death for so short a madness; death at the hand, too, of a man who on philosophic grounds disapproved of duelling,— a man of his age and posi-

tion? It was out of all proportion, cruel — nay, ridiculous.

Not death then, but a sanguinary lesson, such as fashion expects from the injured husband of an indiscreet Frenchwoman? That was even more ridiculous. If Otto survived the duel, he could not tell Otto the real reason; and what would be the use of a punishment of which he would never know the motive.

In short, look at it as he would, he saw no way of acting as indignation prompted him. Finally he resolved to do nothing for the present—simply to wait.

One consideration that contributed in no small degree to bring him to this decision was Emma Lersner's painful situation, and the prospect of being of immediate use to a human being in difficulties. During these last weeks he had learnt to take a great interest in the girl; he had appreciated and marvelled at the depth of unselfish devotedness that was the mainspring of her nature; and he was prepared to regard the wild work of New Year's eve as the aberration of a noble mind possessed solely with one idea, and misled in the choice of means. Even before Otto had preferred his request Lehrbach had purposed defending the girl, so as to mitigate, at any rate,

the consequences of her folly. At the same time if, after protecting her, he were to kill her lover it would be nullifying his own kindness.

As Doctor Lehrbach thus allowed magnanimity to get the upper hand, his heart grew lighter and easier, and he was able to probe his wound with a calmness of which till now he had been quite incapable, and to ask himself honestly whether, in fact, his wrath were above all suspicion of a taint of ill-feeling. He went to the window and stood lost in silent contemplation, looking out at the bright, clear evening.

Presently the door opened from the adjoining room and Lucinda came in, pale and speechless. The terrible trial of making her confession had, to Lehrbach's surprise, done nothing to retard her recovery. On the contrary: the lethargy which had weighed upon her body and soul from that moment seemed to have had a restful and beneficial effect. Knowing her husband as she did, she must have felt certain that henceforth there could be no happiness for her under his roof. His whole demeanor ever since, his unfailing but chilling care of her, left her no room for doubt that he was making every effort to dethrone her in his heart. And it was this that had sealed her determination, and not any question as to whether

he could endure to keep her by his side under the lashings of scandalous tongues, or whether he would still treat her with the consideration and respect due to his wife. To have lost his love and confidence — though no word of reproach should ever pass his lips — that was what was crushing her, what she could not and would not bear.

She thought it over from every point of view but found no issue till it struck her at length that this unendurable thing was what she must take as her punishment. By bending to it she might perhaps hope, in the course of time, to mollify him, and to win back part, at any rate, of what she had forfeited.

But now, as she stood in the doorway, it was easy to read in her face that even this was more than she could bear.

"Oswald," she began, "I have come to say good-bye. I must go away — I must — to-day; God knows where! And you — tell them, tell all who want to know that you have sent me away— turned me out of your house because I have sinned. I know how matters stand; I can see what must, ere long, be inevitable. Do not be surprised. I heard you say, you yourself, that he must be called as witness, and then the truth must come out; then there will be no alternative—and

I cannot wait here in misery and despair till it is told in a public court of justice . . . It would kill me! I know that no one will believe no more than the truth; that every one will think and say the worst of me. So your honor can only be saved by your casting me out beforehand, turning me into the streets as a disgraced creature. I meant to stop, Oswald, so as to screen you in the eyes of the world — but now it is all over, all over. . . ."

Lehrbach was listening in breathless silence; she went a step nearer to him.

"Before I go," she said with some difficulty, "let me tell you once more how miserable I am; how very, very sorry for what I have done. Give me your hand — tell me you forgive me. Once more, only for once, let your generosity and pity silence your wounded pride! If you could dream how wretched I am! — You cannot let me go in such utter grief, away, alone! Give me at least a word of comfort to assure me that you can remember me without hatred and bitterness!"

Lehrbach did not stir. In his stern self-judgment he had been telling himself that he, too, was partly to blame for this catastrophe; that he, too, had listened to passion rather than to reason in marrying a woman so much younger than himself; he had succeeded in persuading himself

that it was folly to hope for her love. — And now!

Lucinda was so anxious for his honor that to save it she was ready to sacrifice herself: no woman would do that who did not feel true and genuine devotion; her guilt suddenly seemed as nothing as compared with this pathetic heroism! At this, every feeling of conventional dignity, every thought of self melted within him before the hot impulse of love and forgiveness.

"Lucinda!" he said, as the hand she had held out to him dropped by her side in discouragement at the thought that he rejected her last prayer. He held out his arms and looked into her eyes with a gaze from heart to heart. Hot tears sparkled on his eyelashes. "Lucinda — my wife!" he repeated, as she paused in doubt, wondering what miracle had happened. Then, with a happy cry, she fell on his breast and bowed her head, trembling and weeping, as the prodigal son may have wept on his father's heart.

It was a moment of indescribable and bewildering joy, of anxious questioning and tremulous answers. At length Lehrbach, kissing his sobbing wife's head, said: "And now, for my sake and your own, never another word, never a sign that can remind us of the past. Your

error and mine shall alike be effaced from the page."

Lucinda looked up at him, and the thought of the inevitable revelation that still hung over them struck her with fresh dismay — the cross-examination of Otto Wellner. She could not help recurring to her fears.

"And what will happen then?" she asked. "Then all your devotion and generosity will be wasted; then the pressure of circumstances will compel you to do what you have just refused to do . . . ."

"My child," said Lehrbach gravely, "when I have set the matter aside, when you and I have pledged ourselves to forgive and to love and trust each other till death, no earthly power can compel me. But set your mind at rest; the law affords us a loophole: Otto Wellner may refuse to give his evidence. It may cost me some trouble, but I have ways and means — and if, after all, I fail, you may rest assured that you shall never hear a word of reproach from my lips.— We could not in that case remain here — but the world is wide enough . . . ."

"And where you go I will go." And she laid her head on her husband's shoulder with a

happy thrill—a sense of protection and peace that would bear her up through all storms.

It was by this time dusk; the ruddy flare of the gas-lamps in the street fell on the ceiling. Lucinda went to light the candles on the chimney-piece; she felt as if she were rekindling the sacred flame on the domestic hearth, as if this first act of care in her husband's room reinstated her in the rights she had lost.

While concord was thus being restored between these two, Otto was wandering miserably about the streets, haunted by the one idea that before nightfall to-morrow he must be far away, a stranger in a foreign land. He cursed the perverse fate that had set him free, and only given him exile in exchange for his prison cell. He saw himself the sport of a cruel coincidence; he had lost his way in life and no star shone to guide him.

He did not return home till about half-past seven, weary in mind and body. He then found Professor Salomon quite in a fidget with impatient waiting.

"At last!" exclaimed the philosopher as Otto, quite tired out, went into the sitting-room. "Allow me to congratulate you from the bottom of my overflowing heart—and not merely because

truth has triumphed, but even more emphatically, on the issue of a more remarkable event. Lehrbach, from whom I have just parted, telling him I was coming to see you, commissioned me—almost commanded me—to announce the matter to you officially . . . . I met him walking with Seeborn in the Johannisstrasse. He requests you will call to-morrow at eleven precisely.— Now, grip fast hold of the arms of your chair; cases have been known in which a moral shock of such an electrically joyful kind as that I am about to give you has induced apoplexy or some other organic mischief. Do not think that I have lost my wits when I tell you, quite calmly and deliberately, that you are not Otto Wellner, a clever young man with an income of nought *plus* nought; but Otto von Arlesberg and the happy possessor of a couple of millions—*minus*, to be sure, two or three hundred thousand marks which the late life-tenant, Anastasius von Sunthelm, contrived to scatter to the winds for want of a due apprehension of the first principles of economy—or perhaps to verify the old adage that 'Ill gotten wealth never prospers.'— Herr Otto von Arlesberg, permit me to be the first to shake hands with you, with a thundering *χαῖρε!*"

Otto stared at him as though his mind was

dazed, notwithstanding Salomon's warning. Frau Lersner, Heinzius and Pröhle, to whom Salomon had given only the vaguest hints, for fear of spoiling the effect of his disclosure, were no less astonished. The type-founder, somewhat oppressed by the consciousness that his name stood on the professor's books with the record of a debt of sixty marks against it, felt himself called upon to make some observation that might counteract the general impression of scepticism. He said, with sincere good-will:

"It is not impossible."

"My statement," said Salomon, "is absolutely above question; it is based on facts, my dear Herr Pröhle; on facts of which there is not the slightest doubt. Indeed, they are simple enough. Ephraim Peltzer admitted that his perjury had been paid for by Baron Anastasius, the most rascally schemer of our time and country, and on searching his lodgings, besides forty thousand marks in bank-notes, a packet of letters was discovered which are ample evidence to any unprejudiced mind that you, Herr Wellner — Herr von Arlesberg I should say — are the lawful owner of the whole fortune till now enjoyed by Anastasius von Sunthelm. The details you will hear tomorrow morning from Lehrbach. What gives

me most gratification in the matter and puts me into a frame of Olympian mirth is that I am convinced, from what I have heard, that these letters are the contents of that very packet which was lost by my neglect. I therefore hail you once more from the bottom of my heart with the time-honored χαῖρε in honor of this miraculous piece of good fortune."

A cheer from the schoolmaster put an end to the general awkwardness. For lack of a hat he snatched off his bandage, and, oblivious of his black eye, waved it in the air like a tipsy bumpkin at a country fair. Then he hugged the professor, embracing him repeatedly till the victim's spectacles fell clattering on the floor.

"You are outraging traditional privilege, my good Sir," said Salomon with much dignity. "Ambassadors and heralds have, from time immemorial, been held sacred and inviolable. Well —enough of that! I have discharged my commission—one glass at least is cracked all across and I will take my leave . . . ."

"But I do not yet understand . . ." stammered Otto putttng his hand to his forehead.

"That is a mere trifle. I give you my word of honor. The facts are positive; well, enough of that."

He put on his hat.

"There are," he said, "incidents in life of overwhelming magnitude. This is one of them. Most illustrious millionaire, farewell! Scientific labors call me *οἴκόνδε δόμονδε*. Till our next meeting! By the way, I was going to tell you something; in my visions of millions I am ashamed to say I almost forgot it. — It will interest you, too. Brönner, to whom you are indebted for all the trouble you have gone through — and, to be sure, for your millions as well, for the facts would not have come to light but for Peltzer's perjury — Brönner hanged himself in prison this morning."

"Hanged himself!" exclaimed Otto greatly excited.

"Hanged himself," repeated Salomon. "It was the wisest thing he could do. He was sure of fifteen years — and he has saved the state a long trial and the cost of his keep."

At the same hour, in the neighborhood of the Shetland Islands, a disaster was taking place which is still remembered as almost unique in its horrors.

The Norwegian packet "Venetia" was run

down by the Russian steamship "Ivan," and within a short time went to the bottom. On board the "Venetia" were Meynert and Fanny Labitzki. They had first made their way to Christiania, where they had remained some days as no one was likely to suspect them there, and they saw in the papers that the police were in eager pursuit. Within a few days of the New Year they embarked in the ill-fated vessel which was bound for Quebec.

A high sea was running when the collision took place. The "Ivan," which was the most to blame, did not think it worth while to run any risk in giving help to the victims, but steamed away at full speed to the south-east; and, on the storm-tossed waves, terrible scenes were enacted. Leopold Meynert was among the first to find a place in one of the boats; before the rudder could be shipped she capsized. The demagogue sank in the icy waters under the very eyes of his paramour and with him the moneys of the Socialist association, which he had in bank-notes secured about his person. Fanny was clinging with half-frozen fingers to the gunwale of the other boat. After being pushed away three times she was at last hauled in by the sailors. After three hours struggle this boat-load found themselves in safety

—the few survivors of some hundred souls. A Danish brig, working her way from Stromöe to Copenhagen, took them up and, in the course of a few days, brought them safe to land.

By this time news of the catastrophe had spread throughout Europe and, on reaching the Danish capital, Fanny Labitzki who, little as she suspected it, had been traced as far as Christiania, was at once arrested. The police were on the alert in every port that the Venetia could possibly have stopped at. Three days latter Herr Seeborn announced, to the surprise of the residents in the capital, that the woman who had escaped with the socialist ringleader had been Brönner's accomplice. Fanny had unluckily left her romantic phial with the prussic acid on board the ill-starred "Venetia." When the jury, with one voice, pronounced her guilty, Fanny, with all her craving for life and dissipation had no alternative but to submit to the judge's sentence, since she had not courage enough to follow Brönner's example.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was spring-time. The park-like grounds of a pretty villa not far from the north gate of the

city were filled with a gay and merry party, crowding round a happy young couple: Otto and Emma.

"Yes, my friends," Otto was saying with much feeling: "You must now know him as I know him—a man who was not my father and yet who loved with all a father's devotion. There is nothing I so sincerely desire as to set him before you clearly and in a true light. I have doubted—till this moment; for I thought that perhaps, after all, this Will of his was meant for my eyes alone. But now I have made up my mind—and here, amid the scent of lilacs, under the glorious May sunshine, is the right place as this happy day is the right time."

He took a letter out of his pocket, looked at it doubtfully for a moment and then went on:

"As I read it to you—here, and now—I feel that I am purging it from the foul touch of Ephraim Peltzer. The words are my father's; the writing is Peltzer's. Only this copy has come into my hands: Baron von Sunthelm destroyed the original."

"My doing—all my doing!" exclaimed Salomon. "However, as I have said a hundred times, I was subservient to the law formulated by Goethe: "Evil wills, and good acts."—*mutatis*

mutandis: I did not mean to have anything to do with it."

The party gathered eagerly round their host, who read as follows:

"My dear Otto, as you will see from the letters enclosed with this, you are not the son of those whom you have regarded as your parents. Your father was Felix von Arlesberg, a relation of Baron Anastasius von Sunthelm-Hiddensöe, who has cheated you of your home and robbed you of your inheritance. How he did this I need not here relate; the accompanying letters will give you all the necessary information. I must, however, in case you should ever read this my last Will and Testament, explain to you the motives which have led me, my dear Otto, to keep these facts — which but lately have come to my knowledge — a secret from you, and to make you swear never to break the seal of this packet unless you are sunk in misery.

"Two reasons have conduced to this determination; one concerns you, the other concerns myself. You will do me the justice to believe that the former weighed with me most.

"I have watched you carefully for some years, and I have convinced myself that, with all the good qualities I discern in you, your character

needs the test of adversity to fit you for true happiness. You bear the stamp — Cain's brand — of restlessness, of soul-hunger, of craving for enjoyment — though the enjoyment may be pure and worthy. Such a disposition makes a man weak and boneless in his fight with the world. I can see many and promising gifts lying dormant in your soul, but that iron tenacity is lacking which feels and acknowledges that toil is the lot of man. What little you have learnt has come to you by the grace of God; however, the best fruits are hardest to wring from the soil.

"Thus I looked forward sadly to the time when I foresaw that, all unprepared as you are, you would be thrown into a world of degenerate indolence and of bewildering splendor.

"Again; my experience has taught me to attach little importance to the possession of great wealth.— I said to myself: If he succeeds in winning for himself a modest competency the loss of two millions will matter to him no more than the bursting of a soap-bubble.

"Only one thing troubled me with haunting doubts. A fear lest, if I destroyed these documents you might end in misery in spite of your best efforts. — So I made a compromise. So I decided on the course I have taken. I have left

you everything that can be needed to prove your identity; I have made you swear and have left you only one chance of evading your oath.

"I have no dearer wish than that these papers may never come to your knowledge. Then you will owe everything to your own exertions and never pine for possessions of which you know nothing.

"The reason that concerns myself is this: I have loved you very tenderly; the certainty that you will remember me with affection is a comfort to me in the face of death which is near. The idea that you should ever know that the tie which binds us lacks the one vital quality of reality, at any rate in the opinion of the world which may perhaps be yours, will not let me rest. I must dwell in your memory as your father, and not merely as a friend who had adopted and educated you. This is the only wish that I carry with me to the grave. If, after all, the time must come, against all probability, when you read what I have written as a sort of soliloquy, do not allow your disappointment to get the upper hand. Reflect that the tie of blood is merely superficial and fortuitous; that the tie of sympathies and a life spent in common is a closer and a truer bond. Think of me still as your father who, to his latest

breath, fondly cherished your image in his heart."

Otto had read this document with growing emotion and most of his audience were deeply moved.

"A philosophical spirit," observed Salomon, "with a marked leaning towards ethics and kalobiotics. Now, who can venture to assert that such opinions are the outcome only of elaborate metaphysical culture?"

Pröhle, who turned away, leading Adele down the next sidewalk, declared that the whole business was absolutely unintelligible, and Fräulein Jakoby replied in a tone of great satisfaction that she had not heard her sweetheart say anything so rational for many a long day.

"If I ever had a child," said Pröhle not content to rest on his laurels, "and need only put out my hand to make him a millionaire, I would take care not to turn philosopher and leave him to make his own way in the world. They may say what they like; money is, and always will be, the first necessary of life; and if Otto von Arlesberg had not taken me in hand and set me on my feet, with a twist of his finger as you may say, we should neither of us have been where we are now—you would have laughed in my face instead of saying 'Yes!'"

"Now listen to me," said Adele. "Once for all: I will not have such things said. It sounds very modest and becoming so far as you are concerned, but it sets me in a very ugly light. To be sure, I hardly know myself what induced me — but that it was not your improved position in life I can swear to."

"Hm. . . ." said Pröhle.

"You doubt it?"

"No, no. But I do know this: you were kinder from the very day when these two millions first turned up. . . ."

"What a simpleton you are! What should have made me marry you because another man had come into a fortune? Or could I possibly foresee that Herr von Arlesberg would buy the printing-house for you?"

"Buy it for me — lent it we will say."

"Stick to the point."

"I am sticking to the point — of course I do not say. . . ."

"Well, well. I will tell you once for all, though it is not a pleasant story; if I don't you will fancy at last . . . You are quite right. I did turn over a new leaf that evening; but there was a different— a real reason. You see," and she lowered her voice to a whisper, "I learnt a lesson from that

miserable Roderich: I saw how it plays the very mischief when two people who are made for each other part for a mere misunderstanding — for that Martha was innocent I felt certain from the first— she did not look like that. . . .

"Well, you need not look so amazed; I had had a sort of feeling for a long time that you and I were made for each other — only a good many things set me against it . . . But you don't understand! The chief thing that settled me was — that evening. . . ." and her voice sank still lower, "a letter came from that gentleman — the baron — a hateful letter, and in it five hundred marks . . . I never told any one, but I have got the five hundred marks put away at home, for I did not know what to do with them, and I could not throw the notes away because meanwhile it came out that the money had never been his at all . . . That letter, Fritz, made me feel as if I had been put in the pillory in the market-place; as if every one who saw me must pass me by and turn away with loathing and scorn. It opened my eyes, and I felt for a few minutes as if I were standing in front of a yawning gulf. Then I thought how kindly and wisely you had warned me and that you had meant it well and in spite of everything had loved me through it all . . . and that was how it came

about, and why I said 'Yes'; and not because you had got a stupid printing-house. After all, so far as that goes, we are mere beggars compared with Emma and her sweetheart—and whether it brings in a few hundred thalers more or less is all the same to me."

Pröhle grasped her hands, deeply touched.

"What you have told me makes me so sorry and yet so glad — Adele, I must kiss you — quite gently — so — on your forehead. — Then you really mean? — Oh it is too much happiness for a rough chap like me! I thought to myself I will be quite satisfied when I can call her mine, and if, God willing, she only will consent; but now — when you tell me — Adele, one more — there is no one to see us.—And as to the printing-house: it is not so stupid; in time it may become a big thing and I will work for you from morning till night and do all I can that you may keep pace with Emma. And you are ever so much prettier than Emma. — But those cursed five hundred marks! you must give them back or they will bring us ill-luck. I will see how it can be managed. It is a real mercy that the thing was all at end so long ago. Mischief might have come of it; and I can tell you when once I am fairly in a rage, a real downright fury, I can be as mad as

any man — I might have done just as Roderich did."

"Poor fellow!" said Adele gravely. "I have been quite sorry since that I did not listen with more attention when he used to read us scenes from his tragedy."

"All the more so as the tragedy is gone for ever."

"What? Gracchus, too?"

"Yes — when he heard that Martha had drowned herself he burnt everything. He would not leave anything behind him in this miserable world. But you know all about that."

"Of course, I know it. But I know, too, that a piece of which there were two copies was found among his books, so I thought. . . ."

"No. That was 'Barbarossa' which is coming out — by the way, this very evening is the first performance — somewhere in South Germany. Lund really seems to have been tremendously clever."

"More's the pity!" said Adele.

"A terrible pity. It cuts me to the heart to remember the time. — Well, thank God for one thing: that impudent jade Tharow, who was at the bottom of it all, is caught out at last. There is Herr Tyllichau to be sure, not a rap the worse . . ."

"They say he has turned over a new leaf. — But see who is knocking at the gate."

"A poor traveller begs for a trifle," said a strong voice behind the railing, and to his utter dismay Pröhle perceived his former ally Karl Hackenthal, clothed in rags and holding out a greasy hat; but he, too, started when he saw Pröhle. In his alarm and surprise Pröhle took a twenty mark piece out of his pocket and gave it to the tramp with an angry warning: "Take yourself off, and keep out of the way."

Hackenthal obeyed, and at this instant a carriage and pair drew up at the gate.

"Doctor Lehrbach," cried the guests who had come forward at the sound of wheels. "At last! he has kept us waiting long enough!"

The lawyer, with his overcoat on his arm sprang out of the carriage, and bowing right and left made his way up the path. His round face shone above his white tie, like the setting sun shedding gladness and warmth on the flowery meads. He gave Emma Lersner a paternal kiss on her flower-decked brow; he put her mother to the blush with some gallant speech; addressed a jest to Fritz Pröhle and his sweetheart; shook hands with Otto and the rest of the men, and then turned to Emma once more.

"My wife desired me to make her excuses," he said politely. "She has an unexpected visitor. I am, however, the bearer of Herr von Düren's warmest good wishes. He begs to be allowed to offer you a gift which, though of no great value, is precious in the eyes of my father-in-law's family: it is the bracelet which he had intended to give his daughter Camilla on that unlucky evening — a trinket that originally belonged to his mother."

Emma colored with pleasure as she took the case; and Otto, who had never been able quite to get over a certain feeling of bitterness towards Von Düren, at once appreciated the delicacy and kindness that had prompted him to send this particular present.

"*Nunc est bibendum!*" cried Heinzius, seeing that all the party were assembled. "Come to the banqueting room!"

The betrothal of Otto and Emma was celebrated under a large veranda overgrown with ivy. It was a very mixed company, no doubt, that gathered round the well-furnished table. Pröhle, in a brand-new yellow and grey-checked summer suit, was, in spite of all Adele could do to him, a brawny workingman with no idea of what to do with his huge hands; Heinzius, figuratively speaking, could never be quit of the school-

master's long coat; Frau Lersner sat in all the agonies of a thrifty and humble housewife; but, in spite of everything harmony prevailed, and neither Otto nor Lehrbach, nor even Doctor Wolf, the protégé of the Hellenic Muses, was discomposed by these little imperfections. Wolf, to be sure, must have been to a certain extent weaned from his attachment to the ideal during his two months of married life, for his sturdy and thoroughly German wife had not the faintest resemblance to Euterpe or Calliope.

The lawyer proposed the health of the betrothed pair. In a whimsical speech he narrated the various events that had run their course before the happy consummation they were here met to celebrate could be reached; and he sketched the scenes and actors with the humor which lends itself to the expression of deep feeling. He only overlooked his own exertions in favor of the two principal personages.

When the cheers of the company had ceased, Otto rose, and filled up the narrative as regarded Lehrbach himself. Dwelling less on his own experience than on that of Emma, who sat, blushing scarlet with her eyes fixed on her plate, he lauded the devoted friendship of a man who had sacrificed many weeks of his valuable time, and

had even made his way into the presence of his Sovereign to petition, as an act of grace, for the pardon the law was impotent to grant. The monarch had enquired into the case himself, for Lehrbach's eloquence had enlisted his majesty's sympathy in favor of the fair criminal with her guileless smile and hazel eyes, and had made him desire to pronounce her free if it might be done without any breach of his supreme duty. When Lehrbach was summoned to his presence a second time the sovereign held out his hand, and said with genuine benevolence:

"I have long wished to show you personally—as an admirable citizen, and a blameless gentleman — some signal mark of my regard and esteem, and have always doubted as to what form it might take, since an exceptional nature must be exceptionally dealt with. I have here for your acceptance the gift which, of all others, will appeal to you most dearly. Read this, my dear Lehrbach: — Your young friend is free. I feel all the more justified in exercising the most precious prerogative of the crown, since the state owes some little indemnification to Otto von Arlesberg."

So spoke his majesty, and Otto's bosom swelled with satisfaction at being able to repeat these words, in the lawyer's hearing, to his as-

sembled friends. Ignoring Lehrbach's protestations he gave warm utterance to the feelings which animated everyone sitting at that table, and especially Emma and himself: and the uproarious cheers that broke out as he ceased proved that he had expressed the admiration and regard of all present.

When the thunder of applause had ceased Heinrich Salomon proposed the health of their gracious Monarch. He fixed his eye on Fritz Pröhle — the erewhile type-founder, now a master-printer — knowing nothing of his conversion from socialism, and dropped a few cutting and profound remarks which, in the midst of all this emotion and sentiment, sounded singularly didactic.

"Hold your own and struggle to rise, all you workingmen," he said with impressive emphasis, "but without envy, and without malice. The champions of liberty may, nay, ought to combine; but only to demand what is possible, and not to pursue an empty phantom. The capitalist is not the workingman's foe — only the man who, in virtue of his wealth, thinks himself privileged to lead a life of indolence and luxury. Now Otto von Arlesberg has proved that a man can be, not merely a capitalist, but a man of birth and splendid fortune, without finding himself in viru-

lent opposition to the horny-handed working class. Those who doubt me have only to visit the huge workshops where he toils as if he had to earn his daily bread, steadily, ἀκαματῶς, in the sweat of his brow: Yes, he, too, is a workingman; we are all workingmen — the professor as much as the type-founder. Let us have no artificial demarcations, but concord, friendship, and contentment."

This speech of Salomon's was expressly intended to admonish Fritz Pröhle; and Fritz was thinking to himself: "Good Heavens! what is the need of a missionary among believers?"

The meal was over by eleven, and the company promenaded the garden by moonlight while Salomon, who was past-master of such mysteries, brewed a bowl of punch which they met again to drink under the veranda. This new phase of the feast was to be inaugurated with verse. The schoolmaster had a sonnet in his pocket — the first fruits of his recovered peace of mind. He had just risen to read it when a servant brought in two telegrams.

The first was from Eric von Tyllichau and dated from Bellaggio on Lake Como, conveying congratulations and good wishes from himself and the young Baroness Camilla. The second was

dated from a town in the south of Germany and ran as follows:

"Barbarossa this evening, just over, immense success. A hundred nights for certain. Please enquire if the Glöcke will take five columns of report. Reply to old address. Kochansky."

This message produced a deep impression.

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed Lehrbach.

"If only he had lived to see it!" sighed Emma.

Heinzius put his sonnet back into his pocket. It was of a jovial turn and in discord with their present mood. He was evidently destined to have no luck with his poetic efforts. But he did not mind; he drank a bumper in silence to the memory of the dead whose ungoverned passion had snatched him away before his genius was mature, but who still lives in the only work he has bequeathed to us as an ornament and glory to German literature.

THE END.

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